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THE FAITH OF A CHRISTIAN MYSTIC

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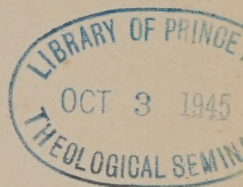
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THE FAITH OF A CHRISTIAN MYSTIC

An essay in the science of the inward life



BY THE REV.

T. WILKINSON RIDDLE

Author of "The Pathway of Victory"

"If ye abide in My Word, then are ye truly My disciples : and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free."

—THE MASTER.

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To my Wife.

PREFACE

IN sending forth this essay, I should like to express my grateful thanks to the Very Rev. Alexander Whyte, D.D., who gave me a copy of his book, "William Law: Nonjuror and Mystic," during a stay in Edinburgh; to the Rev. Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas, of Toronto, who generously sent me many suggestions and criticisms; to the Rev. Canon F. B. Macnutt, of Southwark Cathedral, who very kindly read the proofs; and to my friend of many years, Mr. J. Kennedy Maclean, Editor of *THE LIFE OF FAITH*, at whose suggestion the essay was written.

April, 1914.

T. W. R.

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Let us trust God, give our hearts wholly to Him, then we are conscious that He comes down to us. It is so difficult to live with men, even with our own family, without often failing in the two virtues of gentleness and love. It is only in the school of Jesus Christ that we can learn to submit to everything meekly, and to bear everything lovingly. By gazing one instant only in thought on this Divine Model, we grow calm ; the passion which began to rise is stilled, self-love is silenced, the reproachful, angry, accusing words die on our lips. In our family there are so many subjects of discussion, especially about the one nearest to our heart—religion. At the foot of Thy Cross, O Jesus, teach me to serve, to defend, to honour it, by gentleness, patience, and love.

Life gives birth to death. Lord, grant to me the blessing of a death which shall give birth to life.—MADAME HOSKIER.

PART I

THE GENIUS OF MYSTICISM

I. THE INWARD WAY

II. A SACRAMENTAL UNIVERSE

III. THE INWARD STAGES

No longer do I call you servants . . . I have called you friends.—THE MASTER.

Christian Mysticism is orientated at one and the same time towards the inaccessible God, where all determination vanishes, and towards the God-Logos, the "Word of God," the wisdom and holiness of the world. In spite of the sometimes contradictory appearance of absorption in the Father, it is, at bottom, the Mysticism of the Son. Its ambition is to make of the soul a Divine instrument, a place where the Divine power dwells and incarnates itself.—DELACROIX.

What then is wanted, if we would really cover the facts of the case, is evidently not a conception which would minimise the human action, and would represent the latter as shrinking, in proportion as God's action increases ; but one which, on the contrary, fully faces, and keeps a firm hold of, the mysterious paradox which pervades all true life, and which shows us the human soul as self-active in proportion to God's action within it. . . . Grace and the Will thus rise and fall, in their degree of action, together ; and man will never be so fully active, so truly and intensely himself, as when he is most possessed by God.—BARON VON HUGEL.

The significant thing which the mystic has to give us is his testimony that he has an immediate consciousness of God. He comes to the restless, the fore-wandered, the absent from home, and calmly states the mighty fact that he feels perfectly at home with God—RUFUS M. JONES.

Christianity, of course, has often been described as a "life." The early Christians themselves called it not a belief, but a "way"—a significant fact, which the Church too quickly forgot—and the realist who wrote the fourth gospel called its Founder both THE Life and THE Way.—EVELYN UNDERHILL.

All Christian Mysticism rests on the primordial facts that we came out of the great centre, and that our duty and rest are in that centre. Mysticism is accordingly counsel to the exiled.—W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

CHAPTER I

THE INWARD WAY

CHRISTIAN Mysticism rests on the doctrine that we come from God, "Who is our Home." Accordingly it is the chief business of life to find a way back to the centre from which we have wandered. Most of the definitions collected by Dean Inge agree in this fact, that Mysticism is supremely the quest of union with God. Thus Canon Overton says: "That we bear the image of God is the starting-point, one might almost say the postulate, of all Mysticism. The complete union of the soul with God is the goal of all Mysticism." Ewald states the same truth from a slightly different angle: "Mystical theology begins by maintaining that man is fallen away from God, and craves to be again united with Him." Pfleiderer remarks that "Mysticism is the immediate feeling of the unity of the self with God"; while Goethe describes Mysticism as "the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the feelings" (*Christian Mysticism*, Appendix A., p. 335). However much definitions may vary, the supreme goal is always kept in view,

namely, the ultimate union of the soul with God. And yet it should be noted at the beginning, that if man finds God, it is only because God first seeks man ; a truth which forms the basis of the great doctrine of the Divine election. As a New Testament mystic cried : " We love, because He first loved us " ; or as Coleridge remarked : " He that loves may be sure that he was loved first."

In the pilgrimage of the inward way, the mystic would fain arrive at that blissful stage where God, revealed in Christ Jesus, becomes an experience ; and Toplady's famous line might well become his motto—" Let me hide myself in Thee." He experiences something of the

Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

In the fine lines of Shelley's, there is the
 desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow ;
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

And yet this hidden life in God is not by any means a deprivation ; it is rather the supreme enrichment of the soul. As Mr. Coats has argued : " If a larger personality becomes ours in proportion as we identify ourselves socially with our fellow men, how infinitely may we be enriched if, through a complete renunciation, we are emptied of self altogether, and are filled with all the fulness of the

love of God " (*Types of English Piety*, p. 160). Nor can we forget the saying of Goethe's that it is only with renunciation that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.

This blissful union with God is more than a mere intellectual assent to certain theological principles. It is more than a normal experience of heavenly grace. It is a privilege denied to the soul who keeps back part of the price. To possess the experience a man must sell all that he has, and he shall by no means come forth until he has paid the uttermost farthing. Until the soul can brave the dark, no progress is possible.

In the quest of union with God, the mystic discovers the secret of the inward way. For him salvation is a movement from within, rather than an appeal from without. One word of the Master's is precious unto him—"The Kingdom of God is *within* you"; it justifies his passion for the inwardness of truth, and inspires his Homeward pilgrimage. Walter Hilton cries: "Thou hast lost Jesus, but where? Soothly in thy house, that is to say, in thy soul. Nevertheless, thou art never the nearer Him, till thou hast found Him. He is in thee, though He be lost from thee; but thou art not in Him till thou hast found Him. Thou needest not run to Rome nor to Jerusalem, to seek Him there, but turn thy thoughts into

thy own soul, where He is hid. Thou shalt sweep thy soul clean with the besom of the fear of God, and wash it with thy tears, and so shalt thou find thy groat—Jesus. He is thy groat, thy penny, thy heritage. Jesus sleepeth in thy heart spiritually, as He did some time bodily when He was in the ship with His disciples, but they, for fear of perishing, wakened Him, and soon after He saved them from a tempest. Do thou so, stir Him up by prayer, and waken Him with great crying of desire, and He will soon rise and help thee. Nevertheless, I believe thou sleepest oftener to Him than He doth to thee” (*Scale of Perfection*, III., iii. 2). The temple courts may be dim, and the lamp of God may be nearly out, but in no soul has God left Himself without a witness.

In the first century Philo taught that “the kingdom of God is within us, even in this life; for this life’s reward is holiness, the vision of God; its punishment, that of being what sinners are. This vision or knowledge of the Most High is the direct personal communion of a soul that no longer reasons, but feels and knows.” Such words recall a famous protest of Tennyson’s:—

If e’er when faith had fall’n asleep,
I heard a voice, “Believe no more,”
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd, "I have felt."

What Mr. J. A. Hutton has said of Tennyson may be said of the Christian mystic: "His conclusion, speaking generally, is that the intuitions of the heart are at least as real as the physical facts of the world" (*The Winds of God*, p. 73). In an age of doubt the mystic thus becomes the mediator of a surer faith. He is, to a large extent, independent of those crutches on which the rationalist must lean, and with the wings of an instinctive faith he can soar to those serene and untroubled heights where the Father dwells. He can call men back to the values of the inward way even though there be no outward light, and this is why he does not kill the prophets with the sword. "When the element of Mysticism is in the mind of the theologian, he will avoid dialectical victories, and the attempt to stone his antagonists to death with texts" (*The Garden of Nuts*, p. 52).

In the writings of Clement of Alexandria we find a similar emphasis on the inward way. In his Hortatory Address to the Greeks, he says: "But our God, the only true God, is not an object of sense, made out of matter; He is comprehended by the understanding. . . . No obstacle stands in the way of him who hastens to the knowledge of God;

neither want of offspring, nor poverty, nor obscurity of station, nor want of possessions ; nor would anyone take brass or iron in exchange for true knowledge ; this he rightly prefers to all things." In a remarkable comparison between the mysteries of Bacchus and the doctrines of Christ, he cries : " O the truly sacred Mysteries ! O the pure Light ! I am led by the light of the torch to the view of heaven and of God ; I become holy by initiation. The Lord is the Hierophant, Who, leading the candidate for initiation to the Light, seals him, and presents the believer to the Father to be preserved for ever. These are the orgies of my Mysteries ; if thou wilt, be thou also initiated, and thou shalt join in the dance with the angels, around the uncreated, and imperishable, and only true God ; the Word of God joining in the strain " (*Writings and Opinions of Clement*, by John Kaye, p. 19).

In the *Odes of Solomon*—the work of a Jewish Christian in the first century—we find this passage : " As the sun is the joy to them that seek for its daybreak, so is my joy the Lord ; because His rays have lifted me up, and His light hath dispelled all darkness from my face. In Him I have acquired eyes, and have seen His holy day ; ears have become mine, and I have heard His truth " ; a testimony strangely reminiscent of the Psalmist's declaration : " In Thy light shall we see light."

Clement also emphasises this doctrine of the inner light in a passage which reminds us of Keble's famous hymn: "Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear." He tells the Greeks that the bearer of the Truth was the Son of God, "the Word, Who is the Sun of the soul, by Whom alone, rising in the inmost recesses of the understanding, the eye of the understanding is enlightened." Without anticipating the testimony of St. Paul's, it is not without interest to notice that he tells the Ephesians of his prayer on their behalf: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (i. 17). In one aspect, Christian Mysticism is an exposition of the passage in St. John i. 9: "That was the true Light, even the Light which lighteth every man as he cometh into the world."

Those who have severely criticised Mysticism have usually concentrated their attacks upon this view of the inward way. Ritschl and Herrmann, in particular, have written as though Mysticism were little more than the sport of a pure subjectivity. Thus Herrmann says: "When the influence of God upon the soul is sought and found solely in an

inward experience of the individual ; when certain excitements of the emotions are taken, with no further question, as evidence that the soul is possessed by God ; when at the same time nothing external to the soul is consciously and clearly perceived and firmly grasped ; when no thoughts that elevate the spiritual life are aroused by the positive contents of an idea that rules the soul—then that is the piety of Mysticism. . . . Mysticism is not that which is common to all religions, but a particular species of religion, namely, a piety which feels that which is historical in the positive religion to be burdensome, and so rejects it ” (Quoted by the author of *The Mystic Way*, p. 59). Miss Underhill replies to this type of criticism by affirming that “ far from ‘ feeling the historical to be burdensome,’ true Christian Mysticism rejects without hesitation all individual revelations which do not accord with the teaching and narrative of the canonical Scriptures—its final Court of Appeal ” ; and she quotes the notable saying of Richard of St. Victor : “ Even if you think that you see Christ transfigured, be not too ready to believe aught you may see or hear in Him unless Moses and Elias run to meet Him. I hold in suspicion all truth which the authority of Scripture does not confirm ; nor do I receive Christ in His glory, save Moses and Elias be talking with Him ” (*ut supra*,

p. 60). By which mystical saying Richard evidently intends to warn those who are inclined to reject all law and authority on account of the brightness of the inner light.

In his progress along the inward way, the mystic seeks the wings of an instinctive faith rather than the staff of a faultless logic ; and if, as Mr. Fleming suggests, " there was with the mystics a temptation to soar too high," it is also true that " by the very strain and effort, they kept before the Christian mind the fact that man is meant to soar." On eagle wing the mystic ascends to the holy place, to gaze upon the eternal light through the eternal love.

One thing more may be said at this point. It is in the inward way that the mystic discovers the meaning of life. There come moments when arguments are stones rather than bread ; moments when we feel that life is a tremendous adventure in which something more than courage and high spirits is required ; moments when we are aware of strange stirrings within, when we are depressed with the mysterious hap of things, and when the accent of finality seems a mocking presumption. As Matthew Arnold says in *The Buried Life* :—

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life ;

A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true original course ;
A longing to enquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come, and where they go.

In such moments we turn away with an utter weariness from the dreary road of rationalism and its cult of pure reason, and we seek shelter in the inward way of Mysticism and its cult of the loving heart. Although it may be the way of the bleeding feet, the reward is life in the presence of God. As we shall see, the inward way involves certain difficult stages, but each stage brings the soul nearer the Home from which he is exiled.

Self is the only prison that can ever bind the soul ;
Love is the only angel Who can bid the gates unroll ;
And when He comes to call thee, arise, and follow fast ;
His way may lead through darkness, but it leads
To light—at last.

For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity ; that they may be without excuse.—ST. PAUL.

*Rears not the heaven its arch above ?
Doth not the firm-set earth beneath us lie ?
And with the tender gaze of love
Climb not the everlasting stars on high ?
Do I not gaze upon thee, eye to eye ?
And all the world of sight and sense and sound,
Bears it not in upon heart and brain,
And mystically weave around
Thy being influences that never wane ?—GOETHE.*

I was myself haunted from a very early date by the sense of beauty and mystery, though for many years I could not give it a name ; but I found in my case that it originated as a rule in some minute effect of natural things. I have seen some of the wildest and most astounding natural prospects in Europe ; I have climbed high rocky peaks and threaded mountain solitudes, but some overshadowing of horror and awe has robbed emotion of its most intimate joy ; and I have always found myself more thrilled by some tranquil vignette—the moon rising through a forest glade, a red sunset between the boughs of pines, the crisping wave of some broken eddy, the “ green-dense and dim-delicious ” depth of an ancient manor, an orchard white with the snows of spring—than I have ever been by the sight of the most solemn mountainhead or the furious breakers of some uncontrolled tide.—A. C. BENSON.

*In ambush at the merry board
The Victim lurks unsacrificed ;
The mill conceals the harvest's Lord,
The wine-press holds the unbidden Christ.
—ALICE MEYNELL.*

Nature is a sacrament because it is an exterior index of an inner grace and virtue.—W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

CHAPTER II

A SACRAMENTAL UNIVERSE

AT the beginning of the Homeward pilgrimage the Christian mystic becomes conscious of a new world. All things become sacramental. In everything visible there is more than meets the gaze. In the world around there is that which the eye sees not. All Nature is regarded as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The earth is vocal with the music of the spheres, and the mountains are full of the chariots and horses of the Lord. Everything in the fair world is the expression of a vaster truth. The lilies of the field, the birds of the heaven, the "flower in the crannied wall," the resplendent rainbow, the soft moonlight, the lowering cloud, the setting sun. Thus it is that the moaning of the wild waves, the artless dance of the water-fall, the flow of the river to the ocean, the solemn height of the mountain, are symbolical of the profounder experiences of life. Coleridge says of this conception : " Lady Beaumont told me that when she was a child, previously to saying her prayers, she endeavoured to think of a

mountain or great river, or something great, in order to raise up her soul and kindle it " (*February 13th, 1804*). It is the joy of the mystic to find, with Shakespeare—

Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in everything.

or to see with Blake—

the world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower.

Charles Kingsley, although not by any means a thorough-going mystic, was nevertheless strangely moved by this "cosmic emotion." And although his description of "the great Mysticism" falls short of the more advanced stages, it is nevertheless worthy of attention. "The great Mysticism is the belief, which is becoming every day stronger with me, that all symmetrical objects, aye, and perhaps all forms, colours, and scents which show organization or arrangement, are types of some spiritual truth or existence, of a grade between the symbolical and the mystic type. When I walk in the fields I am oppressed every now and then with an innate feeling that everything I see has a meaning, if I could but understand it. . . . Oh! how I have prayed to have the mystery unfolded, at least hereafter. To see, if but for a moment, the whole harmony of the great system. To hear once the music which the whole universe makes as it performs

His bidding" (*Charles Kingsley ; His Letters and Memories of his Life*, p. 28).

The same attitude was manifest in Kingsley, when, lecturing at Cambridge in 1867 on the drainage of the Great Fen, he said, with a certain wistful regret: "The fancy may linger, without blame, over the shining meres, the golden reed-beds, the countless water-fowl, the strange and gaudy insects, the wild nature, the mystery, the majesty—for mystery and majesty there were—which haunted the deep fens for many hundred years" (*Prose Idylls*, p. 95).

The yearning of Kingsley to know hereafter the secret of the spheres, reminds us that no one, here on earth, can really understand a humble daisy. Tennyson's lines, although familiar, are still true in this respect:—

I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Not until we are laid to rest beneath the green earth shall we know the secret of the daisy that keeps a peaceful vigil by our tomb. Mrs. Meynell has expressed this thought with great tenderness:—

Thou little veil for so great mystery,
When shall I penetrate all things and thee,
And then look back? For this I must abide
Till thou shalt grow and fold and be unfurled
Literally between me and the world.

Then shall I drink from in beneath a spring,
And from a poet's side shall read his book.
O daisy mine, what will it be to look
From God's side even of such a simple thing !

Another modern poet, John Masefield, has written of this same sacramentalism. In *The Everlasting Mercy* we find this noble perception of the ultimate Reality :—

O glory of the lighted mind.
How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind.
The station brook, to my new eyes
Was babbling out of Paradise ;
The waters rushing from the rain
Were singing Christ has risen again.
I thought all earthly creatures knelt
From rapture of the joy I felt.
The narrow station wall's brick ledge,
The wild hop withering in the hedge,
The lights in huntsmen's upper story,
Were parts of an eternal glory,
Were God's eternal garden flowers.
I stood in bliss at this for hours.

The history of Christian Mysticism is very full of this characteristic. We watch Angela of Foligno as she climbs the narrow path from Spello to Assisi, gazing at the vineyards on either side, and hearing the voice of the Spirit saying : “ Look and see ! this is My Creation.” We listen to the testimony of St. Teresa as she looks at fields, water and flowers : “ In them I saw traces of the Creator—I mean that the sight of these things was as a book

unto me." We notice George Fox, in an early stage of mystical progress, confessing that "all creation gave another smell beyond what words can utter." Or we follow St. Francis of Assisi, the purest of mystics, and we overhear his affectionate forms of speech to natural objects: "My Brother the Sun"—"My Sister the Moon"—"Our Mother the Earth"—"My Brother the Wind." As Barine has observed: "He would remain in contemplation before a flower, an insect, or a bird, and regarded them with no dilettante or egoistic pleasure; he was interested that the plant should have its sun, the bird its nest; that the humblest manifestations of creative force should have the happiness to which they are entitled" (Quoted by Dean Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 302). The tender cry of Suso's is a true expression of the Christian mystic's thought of the Universe: "O tender God, if Thou art so loving in Thy creatures, how fair and lovely must Thou be in Thyself."

Probably the greatest exponent of this aspect of Mysticism was the poet Wordsworth. The element of sacramentalism is so liberal in his poetry that it is not easy to choose illustrations. He believed that the world around him shared the life he lived. It is, he confesses—

My faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

With this conviction for a starting point he develops the thought in his poems. In the *Excursion* we have the description of one who was

o'erpowered
By Nature ; by the turbulence subdued
Of his own mind ; by mystery and hope,
And the first virgin passion of a soul
Communing with the glorious universe.

In Wordsworth we see, as Dean Inge has remarked, that " he recognises that the still, small voice of God breathes not out of Nature alone, nor out of the soul alone, but from the contact of the soul with nature. It is the marriage of the intellect of man to ' this goodly universe, in love and holy passion,' which produces these raptures " (*ut supra*, p. 309).

In the poetry of Henry Vaughan we have the same brooding Mysticism. Continually we see him comparing natural facts with spiritual processes. His attitude is that of a silent listener to the discourse of the earth. In *The World*, there is a magnificent symbol in the opening lines :—

I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great *Ring* of pure and endless light,
All calm, as it was bright ;
And round beneath it, Time, in hours, days, years,
Driv'n by the spheres,
Like a vast shadow mov'd.

In Browning, although the tendency is toward a more definite Pantheism, there are indications

of this sacramentalism. In *Abt Vogler*, for example, he shows that behind the symbol is the eternal Reality :—

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist ;
Not its semblance but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor
power,

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist

When Eternity affirms the conceptions of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too
hard

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;

Enough that He heard it once ; we shall hear it by-and-by.

A remarkable writer of our own day, Rabindra Nath Tagore, has some similar thoughts in *Gitanjali*. “ Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that Thy living touch is upon all my limbs.” “ Thou art the sky, and Thou art the nest as well.” “ Hidden in the heart of things Thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.”

We cannot forget, moreover, that our blessed Lord Himself turned to the fair earth for His choicest illustrations. In the lone valley He found the place of quiet and the gate of Heaven. As Edward Hutton has said : “ He Who fed the multitudes was never immersed in thoughts of a world which for a time He had left, but profoundly

moved by the beauty of the lilies in the fields, and the mystery of the wind, and the strength of the hills."

In thinking of Wordsworth, "the poet of Nature amid the Cumberland hills," we are reminded that by a strange and yet sympathetic process, the blessings that many have received at the Keswick Convention have become indissolubly associated with the quiet lakes, the leafy woods and the purple hills. The very surroundings have seemed symbolical of a life at rest, and we are reminded of Ruysbroek's saying that grace works from within outwards, until even a landscape is in a state of repose. At Keswick the tumult and the shouting die; the tents have become sacramental; the quiet roads have become thoroughfares to Emmaus, and yearning pilgrims walk with the unknown Fellow-Traveller. This sacramentalism has become the initial stage of the inward way, and although there are further stages to be passed, this changed attitude to God's good world has a far-reaching effect on the soul.

Before we pass from this aspect of the truth, it is well to recognise that for the mystic the Reality always transcends the symbol. Falling leaves may be symbolical of human mortality, and a flowing river may declare the stream of life, and a vine with its branches may speak to us of the relation

between Christ and His Church ; but the Realities, in every instance we can imagine, transcend the symbols. Mr. Fleming, in his historical survey, has reminded us of this fact : “ What saved Mysticism from Pantheism was the strong sense, shared by all the mystics, of God’s transcendence of any and every symbol, however eloquent. Many of them loved and valued the symbolic, but always either as a means of expression, or as a schooling for beginners. They could not think that the symbol itself was the goal of conception and ideal. They were sure that the Reality infinitely outmeasured and overpassed its richest symbols ” (*Mysticism in Christianity*, p. 15). The Christian mystic, indeed, declares with Tennyson :—

I am a part of all that I have met ;
Yet all experience is an arch where through
Gleams that untravell’d world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.—THE MASTER.

Every one that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself.

—ST. JOHN.

It is not allowable for the impure to lay hold of the pure.

—PLATO.

Be not impatient in the time of dryness and obscurity ; suffer the suspension and delays of the consolations of God ; cleave unto Him, and wait upon Him patiently, that thy life may increase and be renewed—MADAME GUYON'S PARAPHRASE OF ECCLESIASTICUS, II. 2, 3.

*We are of those who tremble at Thy Word,
Who faltering walk in darkness towards our close
Of mortal life, by terrors curbed and spurred—*

We are of those.

*Not ours the heart Thy loftiest love hath stirred,
Not such as we Thy lily and Thy rose,
Yet, hope of those who hope with hope deferred—*

We are of those.—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

The true sign of spiritual life is spiritual dissatisfaction. There is nothing which justifies a man like his belief in the existence of a beauty which he himself cannot reach.

—GEORGE MATHESON.

*On the bosom of my Lover
I remained, and could naught else recall.*

All the struggle, all the toil was over,

From me my cares did fall ;

Among the lilies I forgot them all.—

—THE SONG OF THE OBSCURE NIGHT : MISS STODDART'S
TRANSLATION IN "THE GARDEN OF NUTS."

CHAPTER III

THE INWARD STAGES

THREE stages are generally recognised in mystical theology, namely, purgative, illuminative, and unitive. Sometimes the mystics liken the Homeward progress to the steps in a Ladder of Love. With Ruysbroek it is a ladder with seven steps, namely: goodwill, voluntary poverty, purity, lowliness of mind, a desire for God's glory, contemplation and the ultimate, unspeakable experience of blessedness. With Richard Rolle it is a ladder with five steps: conversion, purgation, the opening of the heavenly door, the fire of love, and the wonderful sweetness; to be followed by the crowning stage of the jubilant song. But for our present purpose we may dwell upon the three stages of the mystic way.

(1) The first stage is termed *purgative*. It is a tedious and difficult stage, when the soul makes confession of guilt, and mingles the tears of penitence with the blood of the Lamb. It is the time of beating on the breast, and acknowledging the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is the hour of

great renunciations and painful adjustments. It involves sincere contrition, humble confession, and hearty amendment ; but it also includes something akin to asceticism. The will is strenuously exercised to beat down the natural passions, to restrict ambitious motives, and to check all tendencies which make for unquiet of life. All the detaining weaknesses of the old life have to be willingly given up. It is the season when the Apostle's appeal to the Romans finds a response in the willing heart : " I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service " (xii. 1). With very many of the old mystics this renunciation was carried to a fearful length, and frequently involved great self-torture. It is almost revolting, for example, to read the story of Suso's terrible penances. For sixteen years he practised the most painful austerities in order that he might enter into the fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus. At an early stage of his career this message came to him : " He who seeks with tender treatment to conquer a refractory body, wants common sense. If thou art minded to forsake all, do so to good purpose." This stern injunction was accepted cheerfully and obeyed with an almost pathetic heartiness. Soon after the summons, he was encouraged by heavenly

visions, which led him to create the most torturous of love-tokens. As R. A. Vaughan has said : " The rose of his love had fearful thorns. Day and night he wore a close-fitting shirt in which were a hundred and fifty sharp nails, the points turned inward on the flesh. In this he lay writhing, like a mangled worm ; and lest in his sleep he should find some easier posture, or relieve with his hands in any way the smart and sting that, like a nest of vipers, gnawed him everywhere, he had leather gloves made, covered with sharp blades, so that every touch might make a wound. Time after time were the old scars opened into new gashes. His body appeared like that of one who has escaped, half dead, from the furious clutches of a bear " (*Hours with the Mystics*, i. p. 344). As a " love-token " he cut deep in his breast the name of Jesus, so that the name remained all his life, about the length of a finger-joint. These tortures continued for sixteen years, till a vision bade him cease.

The experience of St. Paul is not altogether free from the traces of asceticism. When we see him in the Arabian desert ; " in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often " ; beating his body black and blue lest he become rejected ; counting everything as refuse for the sake of Christ ; when we see these things, we cannot help perceiving something akin

to the mystical stage of purgation. Dr. Kennedy, indeed, finds the key to St. Paul's mystical phrases in such a passage as this : " Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, that which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God on the ground of faith."

It may come as a surprise to some to know that the late Dr. John Watson, the eminent Presbyterian minister and novelist, used himself at one time to wear a hair-shirt for the purpose of self-discipline. His biographer, Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, tells us : " It is now known that during the early years of his ministry he adopted much of the Roman Catholic discipline. He observed the fasts ; he wore a hair-shirt ; he aimed strenuously at self-conquest and self-knowledge, as well as at knowledge of books and men. All this was done in the strictest privacy. He gave over these methods, but he always maintained that moderate asceticism as a discipline of character, and as a means of training men to master themselves, is of the greatest value " (*Life of Rev. John Watson, D.D.*, p. 70). In an age when Roman Catholic practices are hateful to Evangelicals, it is difficult to press this point without misunderstanding ; but it is at least

striking that the trustees of the Keswick Convention, whose Evangelicalism none would question, urge visitors to the Convention to "eat moderately and dress simply." Most sensible men would agree that the advice is salutary. We cannot win holiness by struggle and wearisome penance, but we can certainly co-operate with heavenly grace by practising a little wholesome asceticism, and a little practical self-denial.

That there is a profound value in this stage of purgation, most of us would agree. It recalls us to the obligation of presenting our bodies as living sacrifices unto God, and of living for the supremacy of the spirit. Tauler, in emphasising this truth, remarks that the temple courts have to be cleared of the harsh sounds of buying and selling, that the voice of Jesus may be heard. Such an exhortation is certainly pertinent at the present time in view of the alarming encroachments of worldliness upon the Christian life. Of recent years there has been a veritable invasion by amusements. With all its tendency to an unwise asceticism, there is, nevertheless, something challenging about the attitude of the old mystics when we think of the superficial life so many of us are in danger of living. For it is at this stage that the Christian mystic has one text before him: "Love not the world." A text which does not come in conflict with the idea of a

sacramental Universe, for the world is both sphere and atmosphere, and it is the latter that is meant by the Apostle. It was the supreme message for St. John of the Cross, although it led to some torturous applications. When he founded the convent at Segovia, he asked three things of God ; first, that he might not pass one day without suffering something ; second, that he might not die as a superior ; and third, that he might end his life in humiliation, shame, and contempt. While we may shrink from such a thorough-going purgation as this, we cannot refuse to see that in the example of our blessed Lord we have a supreme summons to sacrifice and self-denial.

(2) The second stage is termed the *illuminative*. It is a stage, when, forgetting every other consideration, the soul yearns and pines for God ; not for what He may be likely to do, but for what He is in Himself. It differs from the purgative life in having come to perform good works, no longer as justifying virtues, but as sanctifying values. Although it records progress in the inward way, it involves very often a dark night for the soul. It is a period characterised by doubt and despair, by much weariness and not a little loneliness ; a period when the struggle is transferred to the inner life. Madame Guyon says : “ Though God hath no other desire than to impart Himself to the

loving soul that seeks Him, yet He frequently conceals Himself that the soul may be roused from sloth, and impelled to seek Him with fidelity and love. But with what abundant goodness doth He recompense the faithfulness of His beloved ! And how sweetly are these apparent withdrawals of Himself succeeded by the consoling caresses of love" (*A short Method of Prayer*, p. 19). St. Teresa speaks in a similar strain: "Whom the Lord specially loveth, He layeth on them His special cross. And the heaviest of all His special crosses is a life of sanctification and service without sensible consolation."

But the most notable story relating to the night of the obscure illumination has to do with St. John of the Cross. It is the story of a man who raised within his heart a crucifix of tears, and who entered into the soul's great darkness. "A spiritual madness" seemed to consume his soul. Doubts assailed him with a devilish persistency, and robbed him even of prayer. "The Divine excess," he says, "so breaks and bruises the soul, swallowing it up in profound darkness, that the soul, at the sight of its own wretchedness, seems to perish and waste away, for it must lie buried in the grave of a gloomy death that it may attain to the spiritual resurrection for which it hopes. David describes this kind of pain and suffering—though it really baffles descrip-

tion—when he says: ‘The sorrows of death have compassed me . . . In my tribulation I have called upon our Lord, and have cried to my God.’ But the greatest affliction of the sorrowful soul in this state is the thought that God has abandoned it, of which it has no doubt; that He has cast it away into darkness as an abominable thing.” (Quoted by Miss Underhill, *The Mystic Way*, p. 139).

While few are called upon to touch the fringe of such an experience, it nevertheless remains true that there is very often a dark night for the soul before the ultimate rest is found.

(3) The third stage is termed *unitive*. It is, in reality, the end of the journey, when the soul rests in blissful union on the bosom of the eternal Lover. It is the highest stage conceivable by brain and heart. It is that love-lit hour when the soul hears the Voice crying:—

All which I took from thee I did but take
 Not for thy harms,
 But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms.
 All which thy child's mistake
 Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home.
 Rise, clasp My hand, and come.

The unitive stage is the earthly realisation of the Collect for Ascension Day: “Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,

to have ascended into the heavens, so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end."

The goal of the inward way was, to a large extent, the distinction which Bossuet conceived to be the foundation of Madame Guyon's error. "The doctrines which you advance, Madame, involve the fact of an inward experience above the common experience of Christians"; and it is rather curious that a similar complaint has been made about the movement associated with the Keswick Convention. But the Christian mystic has seen a vision, and dreamed a dream, and he cannot go back from his high endeavour.

PART II

THE SANCTION OF MYSTICISM

I. CHRIST AND THE MYSTIC IDEAL

II. ST. PAUL AND THE INWARD WAY

III. THE JOHANNINE MYSTICISM

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF ST. PETER

I am the Way.—THE MASTER.

One is distinctly conscious of passing into a higher realm, as soon as one turns from other spheres to contemplate the Christ. His unsearchable riches are of a higher and purer order ; He speaks words of eternal life ; He does the things that none other did ; His consciousness is of God and of things on their Godward side ; His nature past finding out. He comes with the light of other worlds in His face. He is as near to us as the earth, yet farther above us than the sky. He is like us, still so different. So simple, yet so profound ; so gentle, but so strong ; so human, yet so divine. As particular and individualistic as a Jewish countenance, more general and universal than the race. All beauty, all truth, all goodness seem to gather themselves up in Him in a manifestation point of life ; the perfect picture of humanity, the express image of Divinity. How rich and inexhaustible His personality is ; how free from limitation in all its limits ; so great that it does not hamper and hem us ; so perfect that the universal streams through it unhindered ; framing its peculiarity into a divine lens through which we may look out into the infinite Reality ; and fitting our human life with the perfection of an ideal. So real indeed that we feel at home in Him here and now ; so ideal that we may abide in Him for ever.—E. ELLSWORTH SHUMAKER.

Jesus saith, *Wherever there are two, they are not without God, and where there is one alone, I am with him. Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find Me ; cleave the wood, and I am there.*—The fifth saying, OXYRHYNCHUS PAPYRI.

Religion is not a mystic union with the Divine, independent of historic mediation. Nor is Christ but the superlative of this choice faculty of the soul. But He is the Creator of the possibility of that Mysticism which keeps at its heart the moral crisis of the race, the mystery of sin, the miracle of its conquest ; and which therefore carries the race's moral future.

—P. T FORSYTH.

CHAPTER IV

CHRIST AND THE MYSTIC IDEAL

IN dealing with Mysticism and Christology, Miss Underhill observes that "the life of Jesus exhibits in absolute perfection—in a classic example ever to be aimed at, never to be passed—that psychological growth towards God, that movement and direction, which is found in varying degrees of perfection in the lives of the great mystics" (*The Mystic Way*, p. 77). While we shrink from applying to Jesus any title which is handicapped by temporal limitations, we are nevertheless justified in turning to His life and teaching as they are set forth in the Gospels, for an endorsement of mystical experience. As William Law says: "By thus conversing with our blessed Lord, looking into His actions and manner of life . . . we should find our hearts formed and disposed to hunger and thirst after righteousness" (*William Law : Nonjuror and Mystic*, p. 170). As we trace the Saviour's pilgrimage to the dark night of Gethsemane, we are compelled to cry :—

This is the way the Master trod ;
Shall not the servant tread it still ?

When we speak of Mysticism in the New Testament, we do not mean that the gospels and epistles are mystical expositions and nothing more, any more than we should claim that our Lord was a Mystic only, and spoke only to those who possessed the mystical temperament. But while Mysticism is built on a foundation of many prophets, it is still true, as Mr. Coats has remarked, that Christ is the chief corner-stone of all the noblest elements in its structure. When we turn to the New Testament, we are not long in discovering very definite sanctions for the mystic way. This is all the more striking, as "the first three Gospels are not written in the religious dialect of Mysticism." And yet, as Dean Inge urges, "it is all the more important to notice that the fundamental doctrines on which the system (if we may call it a system) rests, are all found in them" (*Christian Mysticism*, p. 44). It will be convenient to notice first, the *life* of our Lord, before passing on to consider the mystical aspects of His *teaching*.

(I) In the *life* of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ there are certain suggestions of mystical experience which are full of awe and wonder to the reverent spirit. We think at once of the *mystery of the wilderness*, a phase of His experience which has always been of the deepest interest to the mystic. We cannot enter into the darkness of that temptation,

nor can we exhaust its value for ourselves ; and yet, with great reverence and much reticence, we may liken it to the first stage of the inward way. The plain narrative itself lends colour to the suggestion : " Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (or tested) of the devil. And when He had *fasted* forty days and forty nights, He afterwards hungered " (*St. Matthew, iv.*).

While we are justified in noting the asceticism in such an experience, we are forced to mark a distinction which safeguards our thinking and qualifies our conclusions. In Miss Underhill's words : " There is one deeply significant difference between this psychological crisis in the life of Jesus, and its lesser equivalent in the lives of Christian and other mystics. I mean *the total absence of the sense of sin* " (*The Mystic Way*, p. 89). And yet such an admission does not imply that the story of the wilderness is only a poetic fancy, and that the temptation is imaginary. Dr. James Denney observes : " No doubt the temptations by which Jesus is here assailed are those by which He was assailed throughout His life, but that is only to say that they are real, not imaginary. A serious spirit with a high calling faces the world seriously, and with true and profound insight. . . . In the wilderness Jesus bound the strong man. He faced

and vanquished the enemy of His calling, and of all the work and will of God for man. He contemplated the false and alluring paths which promised to bear Him swiftly to the fulfilment of His vocation, and in the strength of His relation to God He turned at once and finally from them all " (*Jesus and the Gospel*, second ed., p. 210). The simple truth is that the road to a *Yea* lies through a *Nay*; or, to alter Eucken's words without affecting his meaning, the road to a Positive lies through a Negative. Although so much that is usually included in the way of Purgation was absent from the experience of our Lord; although He had no sin to mourn, no vice to suppress, no despair to overcome, it is still true that He trod that lonely Way. In the crucial choice between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world, we have the ideal for our own souls. Jesus has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. Thomas Traherne asks: "Is it unnatural to do what Jesus Christ hath done? He that would not in the same cases do the same things can never be saved. For unless we are led by the Spirit of Christ we are none of His" (*Centuries of Meditations*, p. 281).

If it is true that "Christian Mysticism was born in the wilderness," it is also true that it developed on the mountain, for if we venture to liken the experience of the wilderness to the purgative stage,

we shall be disposed to liken the *Mount of Transfiguration* to the beginning of the illuminative stage. Whatever we do not know about the Transfiguration, we at least know that it was a moment of profound illumination, glowing ecstasy and heavenly vision. And yet, we are not long in discovering that the great reaction has set in. As we come down from the holy mount, we realise that the Way of the Son of Man is no steady, peaceful progress, but a way that has to reckon with the engulfing night. "As they were coming down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of Man should have risen again from the dead. And they kept the saying, questioning among themselves what the rising from the dead should mean" (*St. Mark*, ix. 9). It is at this stage of His pilgrimage that Jesus tells His followers that "the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (viii. 31). Indeed, we are not far away from the Dark Night, not far away from the Garden, and not far from the cry that pierced the gloom: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"

Our thoughts move with difficulty as we come near to *the Cross*. We feel with Thomas Traherne that it is "the abyss of wonders, the centre of

desires, the school of virtues, the house of wisdom, the throne of love, the theatre of joys, and the place of sorrows." We cannot measure the darkness, nor can we enter into the mystery of those incomparable sufferings. And yet we know that in the majestic pain of this Sufferer we are introduced to a mighty spiritual crisis; in a dim fashion we realise that Jesus grappled with the last enemy in that dread hour; that He fathomed the deeps of desolation for the sake of the children of men.

It is not surprising that the old mystics hovered round the Cross with a great and daring tenderness; they mingled their tears with the ruddy stream, and found consolation in His wounds. In a rapture of admiration, Traherne cries: "Is this He that was transfigured upon Mount Tabor? Pale, withered, extended, tortured, soiled with blood, and sweat, and dust — dried, parched! O sad, O dismal spectacle! All His joints are dissolved, all His blood is shed, to the last drop, all His moisture is consumed. What is here but a heap of desolations, a deformed carcase, a disfigured countenance! A mass of miseries and silence, footsteps of innumerable sufferings. Can this be a joy? Can this be an entertainment? Can this delight us? O Jesus, the more vile I here behold Thee, the more I admire Thee. Into what low abysses didst Thou descend, into what depths of misery dost Thou now lie?

Oh what confusions, what stripes and wounds, what desolations and deformities didst Thou suffer for our sakes ! In all the depths of Thy humiliation I here adore Thee. I prize and desire always to see those stripes and those deformities. It is sweeter to be with Thee in Thy sufferings, than with princes on their thrones, and more do I rejoice with Thee in Thy misery, than in all their solemnities. . . . Thine, O Jesus, will I ever be while I have any being " (*Centuries of Meditations*, p. 67).

Whatever may be the final significance of these events in the experience of our Lord, there certainly does seem ground for assuming that in His life of obedience, His death of sacrifice, and His ultimate blessedness in the Heavenly places, we have the mystic ideal, for as He is, so are we in this world.

(2) In the *teaching* of our Master we find many traces of mystical thought. In the *Sermon on the Mount*, for example, the pure in heart see God, the impoverished are enriched, the weeping are comforted, the hungering ones find "manna sweet." In His enunciation of the great doctrine of the *Kingdom*, He warned men against the snare of the outward : "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation ; neither shall they say, Lo, Here, or There ; for lo, the Kingdom of God is *within* you " (*St. Luke*, xvii. 20 ff.) ; a thought developed by St. Paul when he affirms that "the Kingdom of

God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost " (*Romans xiv.* 17). Continually we find that deep truth of Mysticism—*Mors janua vitæ*—death the gate of life. " Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die, it beareth fruit " (*St. John xii.* 24). " If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it " (*St. Matthew xvi.* 24, 25). Mystics have made much of this doctrine of the gladsome cross ; they have seen the Ideal in Jesus, and they have come to feel with William Law that the one true work of morality is " the one doctrine of the cross, viz., to resist and deny Nature that a supernatural power or Divine goodness may take possession of it, and bring a new light into it " (*Spirit of Love*, p. 62).

When we come to examine Christ's teaching a little more closely, we notice the truth of *the Abiding Presence*, in *St. John xv.* Behmen's disciple asks : " If now the Holy Spirit doth dwell in the will of the mind, how ought I to keep myself so that He depart not from me again ? " And Behmen replies : " Mark, my son, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ : If ye abide in My words, then My words abide in you. If thou abidest with thy

will in the words of Christ, then His word and Spirit abideth in thee, and all shall be done for thee that thou canst ask of Him." We observe also, what is *the secret of the blessed life*: "Except ye turn round, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same shall be great in the Kingdom of heaven" (*St. Matthew xviii.* 3, 4). Commenting on this, Behmen says: "There is no shorter way than this; neither can there be a better way found. Verily, Jesus saith unto thee, Unless thou turn and become as a child, hanging upon Him for all things, thou shall not see the Kingdom of God. This do, and nothing shall hurt thee; for thou shalt be at friendship with all the things that are, as thou dependest on the Author and Fountain of them, and becomest like Him, by such dependence, and by the union of thy will with His will."

If we examine our Lord's *interpretation of the Law*, we shall notice that it is always the *inwardness* of the Law that interests Him. He does not set aside the old Law—as some have rashly asserted—but emphasises the *spirit* of its teaching; so that when He adds, after the recital of a commandment—"But I say unto you"—He is affirming the inner meaning of the commandment, rather than

emphasising its outward value. Precisely the same thing is true regarding *prayer*. Protesting against the ostentation of piety, He says: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine *inner chamber*, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (*St. Matthew vi. 6*). Commenting on this passage, Albertus remarks: "When thou prayest, shut thy door—that is, the door of thy senses. Keep them barred and bolted against all images. Let naught come between thee and God"; while William Law counsels: "The first thing that you are to do when you are upon your knees, is to shut your eyes, and, with a short silence, let your soul place itself in the presence of God; that is, you are to use this, or some other better method, to separate yourself from all common thoughts, and make your heart as sensible as you can of the Divine Presence" (*Serious Call*, p. 243).

The inwardness of Christ's teaching is its most striking characteristic. His words are quick and active, and sharper than two-edged swords. "The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." And in an age which is sick of itself, which is confused with theology, new and old, baffled by conflicting ideas and harrassed by the pressure of its own needs, there can be no more transforming experience than a walk with Christ

to Emmaus, when the Artist interprets His own pictures, and the Author explains His own books. For it is as true now as ever that the opened Scriptures produce the burning heart.

For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the Gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from a man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ.—ST. PAUL.

In St. Paul we are confronted, not with one of those natures which is content to be the medium of the spiritual forces of its environment, but with a personality which has been shaped once for all in the throes of a tremendous crisis, and thenceforward transforms every influence to which it is sensitive with the freedom born of a triumphant faith.

—H. A. A. KENNEDY.

Paul was crucified with Christ because Christ had been crucified for him ; he was risen with Christ, because Christ's life in His Spirit was being imparted to him. Consequently he separated himself from world, sin, self, and dedicated himself, body, soul and spirit, to God, even as Christ had done in the obedience of His Cross, and the service of His Risen Life to God. What must be emphasized as distinctive in Paul's experience is the loving relation to the Living Person of Christ.—A. E. GARVIE.

*If I stoop
Into a dark, tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast ; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom ; I shall emerge one day.*

—ROBERT BROWNING.

CHAPTER V

ST. PAUL AND THE INWARD WAY

COMPLAINTS have frequently been made that modern writers, while eager to analyse the mystical experiences of others, are reluctant to describe their own experiences. Thus, Mr. Leslie Johnson, writing in *The Quarterly Review* for January, 1914, observes: "It is very remarkable that, while we have quite a large number of recent books by various authors dealing with other people's Mysticism, there are very few which even profess to give personal accounts of the writer's own mystical experience or belief." But in the last resort it is not possible to write fully of the deepest things in personal experience. There are some things "which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Most spiritually minded people have to confess:—

If I tried, I could *not* utter,
What He says when thus we meet.

And yet, in spite of this difficulty, we are able to discover certain fragments of spiritual autobiography in the writings of St. Paul. We are able to trace his standpoint from the admissions he

makes. Professor Kennedy, for example, in his treatise on "St. Paul and the Mystery-Religions," emphasises such phrases as "baptized into His death," "putting on Christ," "risen with Christ," "joined to the Lord," being "in Christ," and having "Christ living in" him (p. 31); while he concedes that there may be a germ of truth in Reitzenstein's statement that "Paul was a mystic before his conversion; this is attested by his allegorical exegesis of Scripture" (p. 33). Dr. Kennedy does not hesitate to say that we "have every right to speak of the Mysticism of Paul" (p. 284), although he observes that it is extremely difficult in the history of Christianity to distinguish Mysticism from "those conditions of overpowering faith, involving profound emotion, which belong to the soul that has counted 'all things as loss' for Christ," and quotes the saying of Pfleiderer's that "the mystical element in Paulinism depends immediately and exclusively on Paul's notion of faith" (p. 285).

It is rather curious that, in spite of such testimony, and in spite of the attitude of Dean Inge, Miss Underhill and many other historians of Mysticism, there are those who deny that St. Paul has any relation to, or any value for, Christian Mysticism. Canon J. G. Simpson, for example, in a bracing sermon on "The Gospel and Mysticism," remarks:

“ There are many people who claim St. Paul as a mystic. It would be as true to represent him as a Calvinist ” (*Great Ideas of Religion*, p. 154). Dr. Garvie, in discussing Paul’s personality, is not more enthusiastic. “ So real to him is Christ, and all Christ brings with Him, that he has a distinct and certain perception of that which to most men is little more than conjecture. This characteristic of Paul has often been called his Mysticism ; but it is undesirable that a word so ambiguous in its meaning as currently used, and having in its stricter historical sense such misleading associations, should be employed in this connection ” (*Studies of Paul and his Gospel*, p. 76). But it should be noted that the Apostle’s reticence regarding his experience does not necessarily imply that he was not a mystic, although Dr. Simpson is inclined to beg the whole question by saying : “ Whatever he may have been in his personal life, in his public capacity as a preacher of the Gospel, St. Paul was no mystic.” It is true that the Apostle did not go to the extremes of those mystics who seek union in a kind of absorption, although he does not hesitate to affirm the mystical paradox : “ I live, no longer as I, but Christ liveth in me.” It is also true that St. Paul was so magnificently balanced that he did not go astray in his Christology ; his historical sense was too keen to allow him to formulate a mystical

theory of Christ which had no necessary relation to the Jesus of the flesh. Dr. Garvie seems to think that this very feature is enough to disqualify the Apostle from being a mystic. He observes : " There are two features of Paul's spiritual vision of, and communion with, Christ, that distinguish his experience from such as may properly be called mystical. On the one hand, his experience depended on history ; and on the other, it issued in character." But while it is true to say with Professor Hugh Black : " We can make religion a mystical thing with no basis of reason and no outcome in practice," it should also be observed that mystical experience need not necessarily be divorced from the historical nor separated from the practical. Contrary to the preconceived notions of many, Mysticism *does* issue in character of the most exalted kind.

On the other hand, the point seems to go against Dr. Garvie, for under certain carefully restricted conditions, St. Paul is the first to depreciate the slavishly historical. To the Corinthians he says : " Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet *now* we know Him so no more " (2 *Corinthians* v. 16) ; while it would seem that at the first he did not think it necessary to confer with flesh and blood, collecting evidence about our Lord's death and resurrection ; to the Galatians he confesses : " It was the good pleasure of God to reveal

His Son *in* me." Dean Inge, however, seems to go too far when he says : " The study of evidences in the usual sense of the term in apologetics, he rejects with distrust and contempt."

(1) As a matter of fact, the Apostle is, to quote Miss Underhill, " the supreme example of the Christian mystic." When we commence to examine the *spiritual history* of the man, we are impressed, first of all, with his definite and vital contact with the Risen Lord, on the way to Damascus. It was there that Christ came to be in him (*Galatians i. 16*), and he came to be in Christ (*2 Corinthians v. 17*). The Christ of vision was identical with the Jesus of history. In point of fact, Weiss and others hold that St. Paul knew Jesus in the flesh and thus recognised Him in the spirit. In his latest book, Sir William Ramsay is inclined to endorse the suggestion when he says : " Paul describes himself as a witness that Jesus was living, quite in the same way in which he describes Peter and the rest as witnesses. They were witnesses, because they knew the Man whom they had seen. Paul would not offer his evidence as in the same category with theirs, if he merely believed what he was told. He believed, because He *recognised the Man whom he had seen in life*" (*The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day*, p. 23).

It is important to notice that the relationship thus

brought about between Christ and St. Paul was not the result of magic, however abnormal the situation may have been ; while it is surely begging the question to suggest, with a certain school of medical materialists, that the vision on the Damascus road was due to a discharging of the occipital cortex, the Apostle being an epileptic. In Galatians ii. 20, the nature of his faith is carefully described : “ I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live, no longer as I, but Christ liveth in me ; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God.”

After his conversion, St. Paul's first quest was a place of retreat. “ Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood ; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me—but I went into Arabia ” (*Galatians i. 16*). Alone in this Arabian desert—a phase of experience reminiscent of our Lord's sojourn in the wilderness—we can imagine the Apostle opening his whole personality to the new and gracious forces that surrounded him, and seeking for the inner meaning of the Damascus vision. Coming out of Arabia, there followed a period of growth, during which time the Apostle performed certain ordinary duties without any special prominence. Then there came the beginning of the illumination, with the entrance upon the first missionary journey. “ While they

were worshipping the Lord, and fasting, the Holy Spirit said: 'Set apart for me now, at once, Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' " Miss Underhill has remarked upon a certain truth which has impressed every student of St. Paul. " Paul starts upon his travels as the subordinate—at best the equal—of Barnabas, 'with John to their minister.' But by the time they reach Cyprus, his transfigured personality has taken command. In primitive Christian language, he is 'filled with the Holy Ghost.' The 'spark of the soul,' the growing spiritual man, now irradiates his whole character and inspires his speech " (*The Mystic Way*, p. 168).

Visions and revelations of the Lord follow in due course, and then came a cloud, a season of darkness. Dr. Matheson thinks it was somewhere between the Thessalonians and the Galatians. In his letter to the Corinthians he speaks of it as a thorn; in his letter to the Romans he describes it as a warfare. Whatever it was, it caused the brave heart many anxious fears. The confession in Romans vii. 19, is typical of the illuminative stage: "The good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practise;" and many another has had to cry: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (ver. 24). But the great soul makes progress in the inward

way, and in Romans viii 2, we find this shout of victory: "The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus made me *free* from the law of sin and death."

And yet it is an appealing thought that for the Apostle the final goal and the crowning stage of his experience was in the distance. To the end he speaks the language of one who is pressing on and bearing up; never does he use the speech of a complacent satisfaction. Near the end, he is constrained to write to the Philippians: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but *I press on*, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, *I press on towards the goal*, unto the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus" (iii. 12).

(2) Certain facts of importance should be noted with regard to the Apostle's *mystical teaching*. It is very evident that the great events in our Lord's life are to be re-enacted in our own experience. Christ is to be born in us; we are to be crucified; we are to be buried with Him in baptism, being raised with Him in newness of life; and we are to ascend with Him, and sit with Him in heavenly places. In this way, the soul is to repeat the

processes of Christ. William Law, indeed, goes so far as to suggest that by this method does Christ truly become our Redeemer. In *An appeal to all that doubt*, he says : “ Now here is opened to us the true reason of the whole process of our Saviour’s Incarnation, Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven ; it was because fallen man was to go through all these stages as necessary parts of his return to God ; and, therefore, if man was to go out of his fallen state, there must be a Son of this fallen Man, Who, as a Head and Fountain of the whole race, could do all this, could go back through all these gates, and so make it possible for all the individuals of human nature, as being born of him, to inherit His conquering nature, and follow Him through all these passages to eternal life. And thus we see, in the strongest and clearest light, both why and how the Holy Jesus is become our great Redeemer.” And another has said :

Though Christ in Joseph’s town
A thousand times were born ;
Till He is born in thee,
Thy heart is still forlorn ;
The Cross on Golgotha
Can never save thy soul ;
The Cross in thine own heart
Alone can make thee whole.

In various parts of the Pauline literature, we find Christ set forth as the Vital Principle pervading the

entire Universe. "The Son is the image of the Invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (*Colossians i. 15, 17*); a thought which is also expressed by the writer to the Hebrews, when he speaks of the Son bearing along all things by the Word of His Power. Again and again does the thought of the pre-eminent Christ appear in the Apostle's writings. "All things are summed up in Christ," he tells the Ephesians. "Christ is *all* and in all," he assures the Colossians. Dean Inge has drawn attention to the significance of the passage in 1 Corinthians x. 4, where he says that the Israelites in the wilderness drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ. "It reminds us of Clement's language about the Son as the Light which broods over all history."

In the same connection, it is striking to observe that in the mind of St. Paul the Redemptive Victory of Christ has a relation to the whole creation. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself shall also be delivered from the

bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now " (*Romans viii.* 19, ff.).

One other point may be noticed, before we close this chapter. It is very apparent that the Apostle regarded the Christian life as a process beginning with a crisis. He draws a sharp distinction between the beginner and the advanced pilgrim. "We speak wisdom," he tells the Corinthians, "among them that are fully-initiated;" and repeatedly he speaks of growth in knowledge, in grace and in love. In the epistle to the Galatians he points to the *goal*: "Until Christ be formed in you" (*iv.* 19); in 2 Corinthians *iii.* 18, he describes the *process*: "We all with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image progressively, from glory to glory."

In subsequent chapters we shall have occasion to refer to the doctrinal teaching of the Apostle, but perhaps enough has been written to indicate that in St. Paul we have a very definite and personal sanction for the mystic way,

That was the true Light, even the Light which lighteth every man as he cometh into the world.—ST. JOHN.

John, the Apostle, not unworthily compared to the eagle in respect of spiritual intelligence, hath taken a higher flight, and soared in his preaching much more sublimely than the other three, and in the lifting up thereof would have our hearts lifted up too.—ST. AUGUSTINE.

We make bold to say that of all the Scriptures the Gospels are the firstfruits ; and the firstfruits of the Gospels is that according to John, the meaning whereof none can apprehend who has not leaned upon the breast of Jesus, or received, at the hands of Jesus, Mary to be his mother too.—ORIGEN.

In the end we shall have to concur in the judgment of Strauss, that the fourth Gospel is, like the seamless coat, not to be divided, but to be taken as it is.—SCHMIEDEL.

I find that the fourth Gospel, in spite of its poetic nature, is closer to history than I had supposed. The study of it, and especially of those passages it intervenes to explain, expressions in Mark altered or omitted by Luke, appears to me to throw new light on the words, acts, and purposes of Christ, and to give increased weight to His claims on our faith and worship.—E. A. ABBOTT.

The great characteristic of the fourth Gospel is that it grasps in one hand the Philosophy of the Gnostic, the teaching about the Eternal Word that was from the beginning with God, and was God ; and in the other hand, the simple facts of the life of Jesus, and brings them together in a harmonious whole. It starts in the transcendental regions, and shows the Word becoming flesh, but proceeds at once to show how this marvellous manifestation " full of grace and truth " was seen and heard and handled, even if at the time He was not understood.

—R. F. HORTON.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOHANNINE MYSTICISM

It has been observed that the New Testament begins with St. Paul and ends with St. John. Sir William Ramsay says it begins "with the man always straining onwards towards the higher life ; it ends in the man who has attained and has passed through the gate of a living death into life." Miss Underhill notices a similar distinction : " Paul showed step by step, almost year by year, the growth that was taking place within his consciousness : the inpouring dower of new vitality received by him, the building of that ' top-storey ' of human personality which touches the transcendent sphere. His letters are revelations of interior activity ; the difficult cutting of fresh paths, the ecstatic contemplation of fresh landscapes, the breakdown of the old order, the establishment of the new. In the fourth Gospel we see nothing of this ' process of becoming,' though the life presented is the Pauline life mirrored in a different temperament. This book is written from the standpoint of one in whom the ' great work ' of readjustment is already

accomplished ; who has entered the kingdom, and knows himself the member of a new order, inhabited by a new life " (*The Mystic Way*, p. 219).

In St. John we have a rare blend of the cosmic and the personal, the historical and the experimental. The fourth Gospel, described by Dean Inge as " the charter of Mysticism," is very full of the science of the inward life. As Canon Macnutt has remarked : " St. John has ever before his spirit the vision of the Eternal Christ." We shall find it convenient to deal, first of all, with the Gospel, passing on to notice certain features in the Epistles, and finally to say a word or two about the Apocalypse.

(1) The commencement and conclusion of the *fourth Gospel* should carefully be noted, as they possess a certain characteristic which is of the greatest value for Christian Mysticism. In the beginning we are introduced to the idea of the *Logos*, not by any means a new thought in Philosophy, but here identified for the first time with a Living Person. The *Logos* assumed a body. " And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth " (*i.* 14). At the conclusion of the Gospel, St. John states the purpose of his writing : " These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing, ye may have life

in His Name " (xx. 31). In the first passage, we see the union of the mystical with the historical ; in the second, we have an emphasis on the historical importance of the Christ, and the mystical outcome in belief—*life in His Name*. And if it is true that this emphasis on a definite revelation in time, comes into conflict somewhat sharply with certain phases of Mysticism, it is nevertheless certain, as Mr. Fleming remarks, that the writer " views what he holds as historical under so mystical an aspect, that it would be right to say that for him all life is sacramental ; above all, the Life of lives " (*Mysticism in Christianity*, p. 38). And yet such an admission does not mean that the Apostle separates the historical from the cosmic. It has become fashionable of recent years to speak of the Christ of the Ages, or the Cosmic Christ, and while such terms represent an idea which should not willingly be surrendered, it nevertheless remains true that, had there been no historical Jesus, we had never known a Cosmic Christ. The Mysticism of the fourth Gospel has a very clear relationship to certain definite historical facts.

In the first place, it is very evident that the writer had leaned his head on the heart of Jesus. His writing breathes the atmosphere of a sacramental experience, and while he is impressed with the emergence of the Divine Nature in the Here and

Now of life, he is also overwhelmed with the eternal significance of that emergence. In point of fact, we lose the time significance altogether in the fourth Gospel. Miss Underhill remarks that the Christ of St. John's Gospel is the Static Christ, and the favourite expression is "I Am." It is impressive to trace this *ego eimi* throughout his Gospel: "I am the Light of the world" (*viii.* 12); "I am the Bread of Life" (*vi.* 48); "I am the Door" (*x.* 9); "I am the Good Shepherd" (*x.* 11); "I am the True Vine" (*xv.* 1); "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (*xiv.* 6); "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (*xi.* 25). Miss Underhill observes: "The watchword of the Johannine Christ is '*I am.*' He is static, because for the Johannine writer He belongs not to the past, but to the present; not to the swift world of Becoming, but to the timeless world of mystical contemplation. In this sublime conception, for the first time in the history of religion, the two great aspects of spiritual Reality are merged in one; and the eternal, unchanging Source of Light and Life is seen to be the beloved Companion of man's soul, the energetic Spirit of ascending life, 'loving His own to the end,' and incarnate in the race" (*The Mystic Way*, p. 226).

At an early stage of the Gospel, we find a warning message to those who, in their eagerness to find

the Father, would rush past the Son: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (i. 18). Certain mystics have thought with Emerson that "the relations of the soul to the Divine Spirit are so pure that it is profane to seek to interpose helps" (*Self-Reliance*, Essays, p. 38); but St. John strenuously opposes such a view. "Of His fulness we all received, and grace upon grace" (i. 16). Men have arrived at the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, and when they have climbed the heavenly ladder with its successive steps of Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection, they are inclined to dismiss the means of their ascent. Even so saintly a mystic as Julian of Norwich had to confess to a temptation of this character. In the pages of the fourth Gospel this thought of a mediated union is given special prominence. "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (x. 10); "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou didst send" (xvii. 3); "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto Me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is from God, He hath seen the Father" (vi. 45); "No one cometh unto the

Father, but by Me " (*xiv.* 6) ; " If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink " (*vii.* 37). Dr. Denney remarks : " These are not words which it requires theological science to understand ; they can only be interpreted by human need, but that secures that they can be understood by all. Whoever knows what it is to be hungry or thirsty, to be in the dark, to be outside, to be forlorn, wandered, dead, may know Jesus. This is the one thing of which the evangelist is sure, that there is no human need, not even the profoundest, which He cannot meet ; of His fulness all may receive, and grace upon grace " (*Jesus and the Gospel*, p. 94).

To those who thus seek the Way, Jesus says : " Whither I go ye *know*, and the Way ye know ; I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made *known* unto you." If the spirit of wonder had not so entirely vanished from modern interpretations of Christianity, we should not cease to marvel at the potency of such a statement. And yet it remains true, as Origen said, that no one can apprehend the meaning of this Gospel who has not leaned his head upon the breast of Jesus.

It is important that we should notice the teaching of the fourth Gospel regarding the Personal, Holy Spirit of God. Our Lord said to His followers : " Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; it is expedient

for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I go, I will send Him unto you " (*xvi.* 7). What is the meaning of such a remarkable statement? May we not say, greatly daring, that He meant God is not fully known until He is known spiritually as Spirit? Does it not suggest that He Who has come *mediately* through the Christ must also come *immediately* by the Spirit? And is not this, in ideal, the religion of direct personal experience? Until God has come to man by His Spirit, man has not reached the high eminence of spiritual fellowship with God. And yet even such a conception is indissolubly connected with Christ, because the Spirit takes of the things of Jesus and reveals them unto us. Canon Macnutt justly says that the "Mystical movement means that men are feeling just that which the Gospel of Pentecost most positively proclaims, that man is made for fellowship with God, and that God gives Himself to them that this fellowship may be enjoyed. It means that there is Something—nay, Some One—both above him and within him, Who cannot be neglected and disowned ; and that the truth of man's being is only realised when he finds himself out in God. Dimly and fitfully he may see the light as yet ; but it is there behind the clouds, and it is waiting to reveal itself to him through

Christ in the Spirit Whom He has given ” (*Advent Certainties*, p. 178).

This aspect of the Johannine Mysticism is of the greatest importance in regard to the doctrine of development. It justifies the belief of the great Puritan that the Lord “hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Holy Word”; for the blessed Spirit is to take the place of Christ on earth. His office is to bring to remembrance the teachings of Christ, and to help mankind generally to understand them. There were also many things which Jesus could not say in the days of His flesh, because the disciples were unable to bear them. These were left to be communicated to future generations by the Holy Spirit. “The doctrine of development had never before received so clear an expression; and few could venture to record it so clearly as St. John, who could not be suspected of contemplating a time when the teachings of the human Christ might be superseded” (*Christian Mysticism*, p. 49).

(2) When we turn to the *first epistle*, we find again a definite union of the historical with the mystical. “That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life; and the Life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness,

and declare unto you the Life, the eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us " (*i.* 1, 2). There are three notable words used by St. John in the first epistle which have a clear value for Mysticism. We have already noted the word *Life*, and in *i.* 7, we read: " If we walk in the *Light*, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin "; while in *iv.* 16 we are assured that " God is *Love*." And yet such terms as applied to God do not support a theory of negation in regard to His Person. He is Love, but He can show love; He is Light, but He can enlighten those who sit in darkness; He is Life, but He can create.

It is in this first epistle, moreover, that we perceive one idea essentially bound up with Christian Mysticism, namely, that of inward knowledge. R. A. Vaughan observes: " With regard to the witness of the Spirit, I think that the language of St. John warrants us in believing that the Divine life within us is its own evidence. Certain states of physical or mental distemper being excepted, in so far as our life in Christ is vigorously and watchfully maintained, in so far will the witness of the Spirit with our spirit give us direct conviction of our sonship. How frequently, throughout his first epistle, does the Apostle repeat that favourite

word *oidamen*, ' we know ' " (*Hours with the Mystics*, i. p. 274). In *ii.* 3, " we know that we know Him ; " in *ii.* 5, " we know that we are in Him ; " in *iii.* 2, " we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him ; " in *iii.* 13, " we may know that we have passed from death unto life ; " in *iii.* 19, " we know that we are of the truth ; " in *iv.* 13, " we know that we dwell in Him," and in *v.* 20, " we know that the Son of God is come." If this constant affirmation points to anything at all, it surely points to the essential reality and certainty of spiritual knowledge.

Yet another value to a sane Christian Mysticism, in St. John's first epistle, is his warning regarding the spirit of Anti-Christ. Canon Macnutt, in a sermon on " The Mysticism of Pentecost," draws attention to this feature in striking language : " The typical mystic of the New Testament is St. John. None ever knew more profoundly than he the religion of experience. His has been the fountain whence successive Christian mystics have drawn their inspiration and guidance. He is rapt in the spiritual, and his whole soul is ablaze with love for the Divine. And yet it is precisely he who warns us, ' Beloved, prove the spirits whether they be of God.' No region is so liable to the foul miasmas of an evil and perverted spiritualising as that dim borderland in which the spirit of man feels after the Spirit of God. Prove the spirits ! One of the

dangers to which Mysticism is peculiarly exposed to-day is the spirit of denial against which St. John most solemnly contends: 'Every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God, and this is that spirit of anti-Christ whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already.' The modernist (Father Tyrrell), who predicts, that 'the religion of the future will be Mysticism and charity,' stands in danger of the false Mysticism against which we are forewarned by St. John" (*Advent Certainties*, p. 186).

(3) Only a word or two can be said concerning the *Apocalypse*.

It is generally conceded that the influence of its "vivid allegorical pictures has been less potent in this branch of theology than might perhaps have been expected" (Dean Inge), but there are, nevertheless, one or two points of interest which should be noted. Miss Underhill, for example, has noted the frequent use of the term "new." "The essentially mystical hope of a new life, which the Epistle of Barnabas calls 'the beginning and end of our faith,' was the hope held out to every initiate of the primitive time. This profound conviction of novelty it is which inspires the first mission preaching. It runs like a thread of fire through the Apocalypse. 'Him that overcometh . . . I will write upon him My *new* Name; ' they

sing a *new* song' ; ' I saw a *new* heaven and a *new* earth,' and so to the last awful declaration, ' He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make *all* things *new*.' " And it is noteworthy that in the mind of the Apostle the great consummation toward which all is tending is the life more abundant. " And He showed me a river of water of *life*, proceeding out of the throne of God. . . . And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And he that is athrist, let him come ; he that will, let him take the water of life freely " (*xxii.* 1, 17).

One other idea may be mentioned. In *xvii.* 12, there is a remarkable passage which represents the mystic's conception of time. " And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet ; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for *one hour*." Sir William Ramsay says : " I know of nothing more strikingly, more completely triumphant than this expression. . . . The same thought occurs in Paul (*2 Corinthians, iv.* 17) : ' Our momentary light affliction worketh for us more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.' It is a thought natural to such men at such a time. In their estimation, time sinks into insignificance when compared with eternity ; duration in time is nothing ; whether long or short, that which is measured by time, and which reaches an end, is of no consequence " (*The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day*, p. 57).

If in the fourth Gospel we have a picture of a marriage in Cana of Galilee, in the Apocalypse we have a picture of the Marriage supper of the Lamb, and the words of the steward at the first are prophetic of the revelation at the second: "Thou hast kept the good wine until *now*."

His Divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that called us by His own glory and virtue ; whereby He hath granted unto us His precious and exceeding great promises ; that through these ye may become partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.—ST. PETER.

Mysticism ought never to depart from the formula so admirably adapted to it by Aristotle—" to play the man."—

—RÉCÉJAC.

*O God, within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity !
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying life—have power in Thee.*

*With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.*

*Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.*

—EMILY BRONTË.

*I hold it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones,
Of their dead selves to higher things.*

—TENNYSON.

CHAPTER VII

THE TESTIMONY OF ST. PETER

DR. GEORGE MATHESON, in his essay on "Peter the emboldened," has this swift summary: "He is not a theologian like John the Baptist; *he is not a mystic like John the Evangelist*; he is a plain, blunt man that speaks the language of the common day and breathes the wants of the passing hour" (*Rep. Men of the N.T.*, p. 93). This seems to be the general view of the Apostle, inasmuch as he is usually left out of any work dealing with Christian Mysticism. And yet there are certain things to be borne in mind which are of value in connection with the New Testament sanction.

It should be remembered, first of all, that he was one of the three witnesses of the Transfiguration, and that he shared the Man of Sorrow's vigil in the Garden. He beheld the transforming light, and witnessed the engulfing darkness. But there are one or two indications that he himself possessed the mystical temperament to a greater degree than is usually conceded. It is certainly remarkable that the work among the Gentiles should

commence as the outcome of the vision on the housetop. "Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour ; and he became hungry, and desired to eat ; but while they made ready, he fell into a *trance*, and he beholdeth the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending " (*Acts* x. 9); and the fact that he regarded the intervention of the angel (*Acts*. xii. 9) as a *vision*, seems to suggest a certain familiarity with this phase of mystical experience. As a matter of fact, the whole story is full of mystical suggestiveness, as we have been reminded by Sir W. Robertson Nicoll. "The story of the deliverance of St. Peter from his prison has naturally been very precious to the mystics. One of them, a certain monk, who had given his whole life to the redemption of captives, could never read the words 'They came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city ; which opened to them of his own accord,' without bursting into tears. He came upon it at length on Lammas Day, when the iron door was mentioned in the history of that Feast, and of a sudden passed through the gate of death and found himself delivered in the City ;" and he suggests that the words are significant of the "general deliverance of believers, and of the particular deliverance which they come to need and receive " (*The Garden of Nuts*, p. 148).

In the *first epistle*, there are definite traces of

mystical thought. In i. 6, we are introduced to the experience of testing and trial which leads on to praise and glory ; in i. 8, there is the mystic love of faith : “ Whom not having seen ye love ; ” in i. 11, there is a notable passage which suggests that even the prophets who wrote concerning Christ, under the inspiration of the Spirit, desired to know the full and final meaning of what they had written. “ Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you : searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them ”—yet another argument for the fact that the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His holy Word. In i. 22, there is a reference to the purification of the soul through obedience to the truth ; and in 23, to the incorruptible seed. In ii. 5, the inwardness of the priesthood is insisted upon, together with the offering of spiritual sacrifices on the altar of the heart. In ii. 11, there is this solemn plea for a practical Mysticism : “ Beloved, I beseech you, as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul ; having your behaviour seemly among the Gentiles ; that wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by

your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the days of visitation." In v. 10, the stages of the inward way seem clearly taught: "And the God of all grace, Who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ, *after that ye have suffered a little while*, shall Himself restore, stablish, settle you."

In the *second epistle*, i. 4, there is the notable passage—the only Petrine passage noted by Miss Underhill in *The Mystic Way*—"Whereby He hath granted unto us His precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." Such words recall to us the ideal state: "My life shall be a *real* life, being wholly full of Thee." In i. 17, there is a reference to the Transfiguration: "We were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a Voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." In iii. 8, reminiscent of St. Paul and St. John, we have the mystical conception of duration: "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; in iii. 13, there is a reference to the passing of the old and the coming of the new: "According to His promise, we look for *new* heavens and a *new* earth, wherein

dwelleth righteousness ; ” nor can we pass over such a statement as this : “ And account that the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation ” (ver. 15) ; nor the reference to the progress of the initiated, in verse 18 : “ But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

It is not suggested that we have in the Apostle the thorough-going Mysticism that is to be found in the writings of St. Paul or St. John ; but the present writer ventures to think that in the experience of St. Peter and in the Petrine literature, there are to be found certain mystical values which are sometimes overlooked.

PART III

THE VALUE OF MYSTICISM

I. A CREATIVE AUTHORITY

II. A SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY

III. A CATHOLIC ASSEMBLY

The anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one should teach you ; but as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in Him.—ST. JOHN.

But unto us God revealed it through the Spirit ; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

—ST. PAUL.

For with Thee is the fountain of life ; in Thy light shall we see light.—THE PSALMIST.

Those who have been familiar with holy things attain, gradually, to a surprising initiation of what is the mind and will of God on any subject. It is a kind of second spiritual sense. We can scarcely explain to you the process, but the conclusion it brings them to is generally a correct one, and is often far better than any outward weighing or longer thought would have given them. Their first thoughts are better than second thoughts because in their first thoughts there is less of man and there is more of the Spirit.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

The truly enlightened man—alas ! that they should be so few—scarce two or three among a thousand—sinks himself the deeper in his ground the more he recognises his honour and his blessedness, and of all his gifts ascribes not even the least unto himself. Our righteousness and holiness, as the prophet saith, is but filthiness. Therefore must we build, not on our righteousness, but on the righteousness of God, and trust not in our own words, works or ways, but alone in God. May this God give us all power and grace to lose ourselves wholly in Him, that we may be renewed in truth, and found to His praise and glory. Amen.—JOHN TAULER.

Finding our home in God, the bondage of external restraint is at an end. This is not a mere ideal. It is a possible experience. It is that “fulness of the blessing of Christ” we may know even here in this life.—EVAN H. HOPKINS.

CHAPTER VIII

A CREATIVE AUTHORITY

IN passing on to consider the value of Mysticism, our thoughts turn naturally to the vexed question of the seat of authority in religion. Few subjects have caused more discussion or provoked greater disagreement. Essays without number have been written on the subject, and the plain wayfarer has sometimes been utterly bewildered by the different theories advocated.

We are familiar, in the first place, with the claim of an *authoritative Church*. This claim, in its extreme form, is made, of course, by the Roman Catholic Church. The Romanist professes to find relief from the wistful questionings of his own spirit, in the dictates of the Pope and Councils. When he asks the ancient question, "What is Truth?" the Holy Church makes reply. Thus John Henry Newman could write: "The Catholic Church claims, not only to judge infallibly on religious questions, but to animadvert on opinions in secular matters which bear upon religion, on matters of philosophy, of science, of literature, of

history, and it demands our submission to her claim. It claims to censure books, to silence authors, and to forbid discussions. In this province, taken as a whole, it does not so much speak doctrinally, as enforce measures of discipline. It must, of course, be obeyed without a word, and perhaps in process of time it will tacitly recede from its own injunctions. . . . We are called upon, not to profess anything, but to submit and be silent" (*Apologia pro vita sua*, Oxford ed., p. 348). It cannot be denied that this form of authority has made a considerable appeal to a certain type of mind. There is something reassuring in an age of doubt about such an authority; and the mind is relieved of much anxiety and mental unrest by reason of the fact that the Church thinks for her children and undertakes on their behalf. But when all is said and done, the fact remains, that such an authority means an imprisoned reason and a stifled spirit of enquiry. It is not easy to forget that Gregory the Great expelled all mathematicians from Rome, forbade the study of the classics, and burnt to the ground the Palatine Library. Nor is it easy to forget Copernicus and Galileo. The authority of the Roman Catholic Church means the suspension of the judgment, the neglect of the reason and the prohibition of enquiry. Dean Hensley Henson has told us that "the extreme sacerdotalism of the

Mediæval Church went hand-in-hand with a gross ignorance of the Scriptures even among the clergy. The Bishop of Dunkeld, presiding at the trial of one of the early Scottish Reformers, even boasted of his ignorance: 'I thank God,' he said, 'that I never knew what the Old and New Testament was,' and this shameful boast became proverbial in Scotland. We may not, of course, doubt that there were many mediæval ecclesiastics who would have condemned such scandalous ignorance in a bishop, but it may be fairly questioned whether even the best of them would have willingly entrusted the Bible to lay folks. It is very significant that both abroad and in our own country the association of the vernacular translations and heresy were close and constant. The Convocation of Canterbury, under Archbishop Arundel, in 1408, forbade the making of translations of the Scripture into English, and laid under excommunication every one who should be found to possess a copy of Wycliffe's Bible" (*The Road to Unity*, p. 106).

But it is not only in the Roman Church that we find this view of authority. In the extreme section of the English Church there is a growing emphasis on the "men of power about the altar," and the external obligations of the Church. Such an authority may serve as a staff for some climbing pilgrims, but the main objection for the Christian

mystic is found in the fact that authority is external and outward, rather than within the breast. There is doubtless a great deal to be said for an authoritative Church, a duly appointed priesthood, a governing episcopacy, a challenging sacramentalism; but the mystic can never hope to find an anchorage for his faith in the authoritative pronouncements of Church and Councils. It will be urged that many true mystics have also been sacerdotalists; but then it is generally allowed that the sources of their Mysticism are to be found elsewhere than in those external factors which, while stimulating faith, can never give certainty to the soul.

We are familiar with the theory of *an authoritative conscience*. It is a theory which finds many supporters in the present day. Those who have given up all attendance at a place of worship profess to follow Tennyson, and reverence "their conscience as their king;" they are very enthusiastic over "the individual mind that keeps her own inviolate retirement, subject there to conscience only"; and they have endorsed the definition of conscience as "God's most intimate presence in the soul." But unhappily conscience is a varying quantity. It can be capable of the most terrible cruelty and the most heartless tyranny. It can become seared; it can lose its magisterial function—a function so

eloquently advocated by Bishop Butler ; it can become worse than useless, until it sinks into a hopeless atrophy. Obviously, then, conscience cannot become the authority in religion.

We are familiar, yet again, with the conclusions of *a pure Mysticism*. Pure Mysticism has little—if any—use for anything objective or external. It is inclined to discount historical certainty as a small thing, and has little use for an objective revelation in time. Perhaps no modern teacher has done more to expose this weakness than Dr. P. T. Forsyth, and the reader is warmly recommended to study *Faith, Freedom and the Future*, and *The Principle of Authority*. In drawing a distinction between Luther and Loyola, Dr. Forsyth says that one, in a true apostolic succession, turned to the Bible, while the other betook himself to visions, and such direct dealings with the spiritual world. “The one found refuge in the Word with the Spirit, the other in the Spirit without the Word.” Few can doubt that the same author is right when he declares : “The Bible is more than a book, a ‘storied window richly dight,’ and it partakes of something which gives it rather the effect of a spiritual lens. It is this present individualising action of the Spirit that gives the Bible its unique place after all the discounts allowed to criticism, and makes it canonical for us in respect of the

Gospel. It is this that makes it equally the Book of every age and stage. We are enlarged by Shakespeare, but on the Bible we live. Shakespeare is in our study, but the Bible is by our deathbed " (*Faith, Freedom and the Future*, p. 34).

What then, positively, is the authority for the Christian mystic? The answer has been anticipated in the foregoing quotation. It is a *creative* authority which is the outcome of the action of the Living Spirit on the equally Living Word. We have not weakened the power of the Bible when we say that our fathers, in escaping from an infallible Church, sought refuge in an infallible Book; as a matter of fact, there is no justice in the antithesis. Our ultimate authority is the Author of our new creation, Who through the Word (which He has also created) and by the Spirit, assures us of His grace and mercy. The whole error, as it appears to the present writer, has been in the separation of the Word and the Spirit. If we put asunder what God has joined together, we shall have on the one hand, a petrifying Bibliolatry; and on the other hand, a pantheistic religiosity. Spiritualism without the objective Word means a vague soul-culture; the objective Word without a Scriptural spiritualism, tends towards a judicial deception. In respect of the latter, it is noteworthy that many hold a brief for justification by faith, who have

little, if any, interest, in practical sanctification by the Spirit. They are strenuous exponents of systematic theology, but they are not enthusiastic over an experimental life in grace.

The Christian mystic treads the middle way. He holds fast to the objective Word, to a definite historical Revelation in time, but the objective Word does not become authoritative till it has been brought home to his heart by the Eternal Spirit.

“ Every statement about God is challengeable till God states Himself, in His own way, by His own Son, His own Spirit, His own Word, His own Church, to our soul, which He remakes in the process. And the challenge, coming at the right place (alas, for the heartlessness of those who force it) is God’s ordinance, to drive us onward and inward upon the soul’s Centre and King there ” (*The Principle of Authority*, p. 22). On this principle, Luther argued for the absolute necessity of private judgment in the recognition of Divine truth. He declared that the Bible required no outward testimony, for the Word of the Gospel was authenticated by the Holy Spirit in the heart ; while Calvin, after showing that authority does not reside in the Church, goes on : “ If we wish to make provision for consciences so as to keep them from being in perpetual doubt, we must take the authority of the Scriptures

as higher than human reasoning or proofs or conjectures. In other words we must found it on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit . . . For granting that, in their own majesty, there is sufficient ground for reverencing them, yet they begin truly to touch us when they are sealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

Christian Mysticism emphasises the *inwardness* of authority. It dares to believe that truth is revealed to the soul through the Spirit Who searcheth all things; and *that* revelation becomes creative of authority; indeed, the revelation of truth by the Spirit *is* the authority. Such authority is more than the mere force of a Scripture passage; it is the very speech of God brought home to the heart and conscience by God Himself. The historic, objective Word is the medium of His communication.

It is somewhat remarkable that Jewish Mysticism preserved a similar principle. With all its adventures along the inward way it preserved a firm adherence to the ceremonial side of Judaism, together with a great veneration of the Law. Dr. Abelson, the latest historian of Jewish Mysticism, informs us that, "although living in an atmosphere of mystery, and looking to the Divine secret to unroll itself at any moment, they yet never overlooked the claims of institutional religion; they never flouted the ceremonial side of Judaism;

they were inflexible upholders of the Law and its associated traditions. The same phenomenon is, of course, seen in the history of Christian Mysticism, where the first-hand, inward individualised experiences of the ground-truths of religion are conformed to the prevailing and accredited dogmas of Christianity" (*Jewish Mysticism*, p. 31).

For the Christian mystic, authority is found, not in a vague and unrestricted spiritualism unrelated to a Redeeming Word, nor in a lifeless and hopeless externalism; it is found in the creative activity of the Spirit of God, Who, bringing the Living Word home to the living soul, gives the sense of spiritual certainty. Such an authority issues in an abundant liberty; the letter no longer killeth, for the Spirit giveth life (2 *Corinthians* iii. 16); and we know that our Redeemer liveth, because He liveth in our hearts.

In diligence not slothful ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord ; rejoicing in hope ; patient in tribulation ; continuing stedfastly in prayer ; communicating to the necessities of the saints ; given to hospitality.—ST. PAUL.

To the majority of Christians, Christianity has never appeared as a Mysticism, or even as mystical. They have found it ever a practical religion, for it is only few and rare minds that become mystic. So it is indeed with St. Benedict. No saint in the calendar more practical than he ; but it is an ideal practicality, very different from that of St. Ignatius, and yet dealing with the same objects.—EDWARD HUTTON.

*A life of self-renouncing love,
Is a life of liberty.*—ANNA L. WARING.

The mystic is probably not a man prominent in public action. He is a practical man because he is doing the one thing that is worth doing, getting back whence he came. Those who on this earth attain to the union are perhaps doing the work of their brethren, and bearing their burdens most perfectly. He is not useless who is part of the activity of God.—W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

*who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly ; thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest ;
They also serve who only stand and wait.*

—JOHN MILTON.

To get, we must also give ; to advance, we must surrender ; to gain, we must lose ; to attain, we must resign. From the nature of things, life means choice and selection, and every positive choice negates all other possibilities. Every choice runs a line of cleavage through the entire universe. If I take this, I give up that.—RUFUS M. JONES.

CHAPTER IX

A SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY

It is frequently asserted that Mysticism, from the very nature of things, is opposed to a life of healthy activity. The aggressive man of affairs who is always "up and doing with a heart for any fate," is set in contrast to the contemplative mystic who, like Shakespeare's native hue of resolution, is supposed to be "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." A contrast, be it said, which is usually to the mystic's shame and disadvantage. The present age is so violently pragmatic and so entirely utilitarian, that there is little belief in any practical good coming out of Mysticism. This lofty attitude has been met, in a small degree, by the coining of a new term, namely, the practical mystic. But old ideas die hard, and it is still true that the average reader of the New Testament would give the palm to the busy Martha rather than to the contemplative Mary. The late Charles Voysey, indeed, once preached a somewhat bitter sermon, in which he protested against our Lord's attitude to the woman

who was cumbered with much serving. But such a protest—even if allowable—misses the whole point of the story. The words of Christ had reference to the fact that Martha was “anxious and troubled about many things”; and He sought to show her a more excellent way. It seldom occurs to the critics of Mary that in all probability she was equally industrious at the right time and under more suitable conditions. But the general truth remains; for most people, Mysticism is synonymous with mysticism, both of thought and of deed. We are referred to Kingsley’s song of farewell—“*Do noble deeds, not dream them all day long.*”

The second value, therefore, that we must consider, has to do with a *spiritual activity*. The Christian mystic is fully assured that it is possible to live an Eternal Life in the midst of Time. He feels that while he will still be called upon to perform the duties of the commonplace, he will be able to perform them after a new and quite unprecedented fashion. He has an instinctive feeling that it is possible to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. In fine, he believes with St. Teresa, that the combination of Martha and Mary is necessary to perfect living. His Master has promised to make all things *new*; and he is justified in believing that even the old and irksome tasks will be tasks of pleasantness to the love-lit heart.

When we give the matter a little thoughtful consideration, we find that not a few have combined in their lives the qualities of Mary and Martha. They have been contemplative, they have entered upon the way of purgation, they have resolutely beaten back the encroachments of the Evil One, and they have, perhaps, entered into the deeper rest of Christ. And yet such developments have not hindered their practical usefulness, but rather increased it. The Keswick Convention has frequently been charged with a certain spiritual selfishness, but the most convincing and impressive reply to such a suggestion is to be found in the great company of missionaries from all parts of the world, who assemble periodically at the little Lakeside town, after strenuous service for Christ in heathen lands. It is well-known that the late Hudson Taylor used to speak of Keswick as his "happy hunting ground." While it would not be correct to liken the Convention to a thorough-going Christian Mysticism, it is nevertheless conceded that they have certain things in common. The Rev. Dundas Harford, for example, does not hesitate, in his introduction to *The Mending of Life*, to compare the experience of Richard Rolle with the crisis of Canon Battersby: "Writing on the eve of the Keswick Convention of 1913, it is natural to look back with wonder and thanksgiving upon

all that has flowed forth upon the world, through the unbroken series of thirty-eight annual gatherings since 1875, and to trace it back in large degree to the experience of that one man in that great concourse of people at Oxford in 1874. And then the mind goes back well-nigh six hundred years to that solitary cell to which the young hermit fled from Oxford about the year 1320. There he was visited with the rapture of Heart and Song and Sweetness. Thence he was sent out to quicken and spread abroad through the land the 'fire of love' in other hearts; to produce in them, in infinite variety, impulses that went towards 'the mending of life' " (p. xlviii.).

Mr. Fleming, in his historical survey, has also written of the Keswick Movement from a similar point of view: "A new chapter in the history of Evangelicalism opened with the founding of the Keswick Convention, and the dissemination of its distinctive teaching of the indwelling and sanctifying Christ; another instance of how doctrines dear to Mysticism have a way of reasserting themselves from time to time with inexhaustible vitality" (*Mysticism in Christianity*, p. 248).

If we think of the Keswick Convention, then, which certainly has some things in common with the faith of a Christian mystic, we shall see that the deeper *abandon* to Christ invariably means a

deeper passion for service ; that the richer consecration inevitably leads to a more spiritual activity ; that the very hungering and thirsting for the living God is only the prelude to a deeper hungering and thirsting for men. It is the admission of those who have trod the solitary way that they never knew the freedom of service until they found the deeper rest. In quietness and confidence they found their strength.

And yet, in spite of all the available evidence, both ancient and modern, there are still those who charge Christian Mysticism with spiritual selfishness and social indifference. Even Mr. R. H. Coats, who is not unfriendly to the mystical type of piety, can give way to the following harsh sayings, which can hardly be said to do justice to the actual facts of the case. In *Types of English Piety*, we read :—

“ Mystics are in danger of being deceived by the idea that God is more readily to be received into the soul passively than actively. They would rather swoon into the Infinite than heal a broken heart, or help a lame dog over a stile ” (p. 219).

“ Mystics have always shown a tendency to esteem the contemplative life as pre-eminently divine, and to scorn the merely active life as gross and earthly by comparison ” (p. 220).

“ The mystic proper is seldom fired by a great and fervent passion for social progress. He moves

in a circle of ideas remote from those of secular advancement and evolution " (p. 223).

It is difficult to find any adequate ground for such statements. Even such a "mystic proper," as Eckhart, clearly taught that "what a man takes in by contemplation he must pour out in love," and suggested that Martha was *above* Mary in that she had learned her lesson, while her sister was yet in school. Certainly, we cannot imagine Francis of Assisi refusing to "help a lame dog over a stile," any more than we can imagine Ruysbroek preferring to "swoon into the Infinite" rather than "heal a broken heart." If we take a rapid summary of the history, it would seem that the actual facts are against Mr. Coats. Dean Inge, in the preface to his *Bampton Lectures*, justly observes:—

"A very short study would be sufficient to dispel some of the prejudices which still hang round the name of Mysticism—e.g., that its professors are unpractical dreamers, and that this type of religion is antagonistic to the English mind. As a matter of fact, all the great mystics have been energetic and influential, and their business capacity is specially noted in a curiously large number of cases. For instance, Plotinus was often in request as a guardian and trustee; St. Bernard showed great gifts as an organiser; St. Teresa, as a founder of convents and administrator, gave evidence of extraordinary

practical ability ; even St. Juan of the Cross displayed the same qualities ; John Smith was an excellent bursar of his college ; Fénelon ruled his diocese extremely well ; and Madame Guyon surprised those who had dealings with her by her great aptitude for affairs ” (*Christian Mysticism*, xi.).

Very often those who see visions and dream dreams are the path-finders of the race, light-bringers in the dark, adventurers through untrodden ways, mariners on unknown seas. If we think of the old mystics we shall soon recognise that they played an honourable part in the activities of life. St. Benedict could say : “ My Order is a School in which men learn to serve God ” ; and someone has remarked that wherever the Benedictines brought the Cross, there also, they took the plough. In their abbey in Italy the first printing-press was established, and when Caxton printed his first book, it was in the abbey of the Benedictines that he found a welcome. St. Bernard can cry :—

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast—

but he can also decide between rival Popes, cross the Alps time after time to quiet tossing Italy, and arbitrate between turbulent nobles and alienated people. If St. Dominic can institute and compose the crown of prayers known as the Devotion of the Rosary, he can also establish an order of preaching

friars ; if St. Francis of Assisi has visions and revelations above the lot of ordinary man, he can still say to his brothers : “ A religious only preacheth well inasmuch as he worketh well, for the doer is known by his works.” If Catherine of Siena feels, as she says, that “ God had taught her to build in her soul a private closet, strongly vaulted with Divine Providence, and to keep herself always close and retired there,” it is also true that she was a genius in the realm of the political. In three-and-thirty years she changed the face of Europe. Mr. Hutton says of her : “ I suppose no saint that ever lived ever wielded half her power ; and indeed few statesmen, even of the greatest, have had harder problems to solve, or so short a time in which to solve them.”

It was because of their Mysticism that the old saints achieved so much. With their spirits at the secret source of every precious thing, they could go forth to the duties of the commonplace, conscious that their light affliction was but for a moment, and well assured that He Who had called them by His grace, would perfect that which concerned them. Mrs. Lead says it was this very union with the Divine which enabled the ancient believers to perform their miracles ; the will of the soul became a resistless power, before which even the devils trembled. Whatever may be the general view in

regard to Mysticism, it cannot be doubted that the Church is in serious need of a more spiritual activity ; an activity which is suggestive of the Holy Spirit Himself ; an activity which is productive of the fruit of the Spirit, rather than of the works of the flesh ; an activity which flows out of an ordered life. And it is the deep conviction of very many that such a spiritual activity is one of the blessings that follows the humble pilgrimage along the inward way.

But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born who are enrolled in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel.—HEBREWS XII. 22-24.

The Church is the Reality symbolised by the ancient people of God. To her belong all the titles of honour which Moses had given by anticipation to Israel, and which were applicable to it only in virtue of a typical consecration. "Ye are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people."—F. GODET.

How can fellowship in the Church liberate? Is not the Church essentially a restrictive force, working under the sway of fixed ideas, striving to train the lives of those who acknowledge her according to one rule? Certainly there is a restrictive, a negative side, inherent in the Church's ideal. She cannot affirm without denying. But her affirmations are all-important. And her one great law which affects human developments is a positive affirmation. No true development, she cries, no true self-realisation, except through conscious dependence upon the spiritual world, which underlies and encircles the world of phenomena. It is that consciousness which gives to the whole life of man its true orientation. It will not make those who share it all alike. It will invite to the most widely-differing experiments. It will produce types of character which may, at first acquaintance, leave us thoroughly perplexed and ill at ease. But everywhere and in all respects it will speak of life, of personalities that are alive.—J. KENNETH MOZLEY.

I believe in . . . the Holy Catholic Church.—

—APOSTLES' CREED.

CHAPTER X

A CATHOLIC ASSEMBLY

THE Christian mystic never wearies in his exposition of the holy catholic Church. In spite of the bitter wrangles of the sects, in spite of the unhappy divisions between the Established and the Free Churches, he does not waver in his belief that there is, call it by what name we like, a blest communion, a fellowship Divine, a holy catholic assembly, in which even now kindred hearts may find a union. It is the general assembly and Church of the first-born. Even now, amid the twilight, there is a commonwealth of the redeemed; even now the essential unity is stronger than some are disposed to imagine.

While the mystic is loyal to the Church of his birth, he has a larger interest in the Church of the first-born. He does not undervalue an external fellowship, but he knows that there is a fellowship which has neither name nor sign. St. Teresa, one of the most notable of the mystic band, was a fervent Catholic; Henry Vaughan was a loyal son

of the Church of England ; William Cowper was a distinguished member of the Evangelical party ; George Fox was a fervent Quaker ; and yet, who will deny that they were all strangely one in Christ Jesus ? Who will suggest that the things which separated them were greater than *the* thing which united them ? For in the heart of every mystic there is the longing for home, and that yearning absorbs everything else. He is loyal to the Church which has received him, and while he recognises in it a " stage on the way to the esoteric Church, the Holy Assembly that has hoped and worked through the ages " (*The Garden of Nuts*, p. 71), he does not regard it as a barrier which separates him from those who share a like precious faith, but express it in other terms. It is not often that the Christian mystic becomes a zealous denominationalist ; he remembers that there are twelve gates to the City, and as many avenues of approach as there are human hearts ; and yet this does not imply that he becomes an undenominationalist, that here on earth he finds no place for his feet ; nor does Christian Mysticism encourage an indifferent attitude to the visible society of Jesus. The Church is the pilgrims' hospice, the place of refreshment and the house of quiet. It is a shadow of the good things to come. Its feast of Bread and Wine is prophetic of that more glorious feast at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

With some, the Church has been the great Mystagogue ; and Baptism, the Eucharist and Unction have corresponded to the inward stages. With others, the severity of the worship has served as a kind of reminder that the real purpose of the Church is to help men to do without it. They have anticipated the time when the former things will be done away. Others, again, have discovered a stimulus for faith in the splendours of a noble liturgy, the imagery of an elaborate symbolism, and the reality of a common brotherhood. But a precious thread connects the mystic pearls of all denominations—the silken cord of love. It is because of this that the Christian mystic shrinks from using harsh and bitter words about the hospice of any pilgrim. While he is thankful for the hospitality of his own Church, he knows that God is the Giver of every kind of grace and every kind of comfort, and that each community has some special portion of His comforting grace. He is more concerned about the one Spirit than he is about the diversities of gifts. No Baptist would be so foolish as to claim that C. H. Spurgeon is the exclusive monopoly of the Baptists, for he has watered the gardens of all the Churches ; and no Anglican would suggest that Dr. Westcott is the particular preserve

of the Establishment ; and no Salvationist would claim that General Booth can be confined to the narrow limits of the Salvation Army. When we think of such men, our eyes are lifted to the eternal hills, and we forget the barriers man has created, in our thankfulness that there is such a thing as a Communion of Saints and a Holy Catholic Church. In truth we can cry : “ We are *not* divided, all one body we.”

Even Cicero, as he meditates upon old age, breaks forth into this expression of catholic hope : “ O glorious day ! when shall I retire from this low and sordid scene, to associate with the Divine Assembly of departed spirits ? And not with those only whom I just now mentioned, but with my dear Cato, that best of sons, and most valuable of men. It was my sad fate to lay his body on the funeral pile, when by the course of nature I had reason to hope he would have performed the last office to mine. His soul, however, did not desert me, but still looked back on me in its flight to those happy mansions, to which he was assured I should one day follow him. If I seemed to bear his death with fortitude, it was by no means that I did not most sensibly feel the loss I had sustained ; it was because I supported myself with the consoling reflection that we could not long be separated.”

The mystic knows that even in death he is not

divided, and that in life he is surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.

To you the thought of death is terrible,
Having such hold of life ; to me, it is not ;
No more than is the lifting of a latch,
Or as a step into the open air
Out of a tent, already luminous
With light that shines through its transparent folds.

The value of Christian Mysticism in regard to the Catholic Assembly is in the fact that it emphasises *inward* union rather than outward unity. There *is* a road to union ; but is there a road to unity ? The distinction may be fine, but it is real. The mystic, in point of fact, is not particularly eager for Christian unity as commonly understood. He has a firm conviction that the many may unite in the One, but he shrinks from any attempt to make all men the same. He would make them of one blood, but he would not make them of one denomination. He would have them to be a kingdom of priests, but he would let them pronounce their shibboleths in their own way. Christian Mysticism seems to involve a process of fusion, wherein the noblest elements of every confession are assimilated into one catholic whole. The present writer once listened to an address from an admirable man, in which he declared that he was working with one end in view, namely : to make all men Baptists. This is, doubtless,

consistent with a pure logic, but the mystic finds that the staff of logic breaks before the long pilgrimage is over, and he does not lean too heavily. In the very nature of the case, the mystic is not a good proselytiser, and in the case of Henry Vaughan and William Wordsworth it is striking that, until they got away from strictly ecclesiastical subjects, their genius was fettered and their imagination imprisoned.

It was surely a moment of great inspiration that led the trustees of the Keswick Convention to adopt the motto of a true Christian Mysticism—"All *one* in Christ Jesus"; it was a humble and hearty recognition of the truth, that behind all the existing denominations, there is the holy Catholic Assembly, and the Church of the first-born. Nor can such a motto be said to be a subterfuge for a true Christian charity. Few sights are more impressive than the annual Convention at the little lakeside town, where five thousand hungry souls assemble in the place of quiet to receive the living bread from the Living Lord. Few sights have impressed the present writer as much. Distinguished officers of the Established Church move with grace and sympathy in the society of Plymouth Brethren; Nonconformists of every shade of opinion share the feast with one another. The Keswick Convention, in one of its aspects, is an outward

witness to that essential oneness of those "who hold the Head." It is in such an assembly that we look forward to the General Assembly and anticipate the final fellowship of all who believe. Not for nothing are we told that there are many mansions in the Father's House.

And yet it should be noted that no vital principle is conceded in such Catholicity. The Anglican retains his belief in the value and efficacy of episcopacy, and the Nonconformist treasures his ideal of external freedom ; and yet there is a fusion, which is as welcome as it is wonderful. Mr. Coats complains : "Evangelical clergymen may have cordially fraternised with their Free Church brethren on the Exeter Hall platform, or in the tents at Keswick. But the standards of their own Church stubbornly prevent an equal and reciprocal communion. They must be institutional first of all, and evangelical afterwards." But the Christian mystic is in quest of a deeper union and a richer fellowship than the mere dropping of ecclesiastical institutions. He does not think the Millennium would dawn were Free Church ministers at liberty to preach in Anglican pulpits ; nor does he think that the standards of any Church need be a barrier to a reciprocal communion. Sir W. Robertson Nicoll has reminded us that "however zealous a man may be in devotion to the outward society in

which he was born, in which he first repented and trusted, he will find as he goes on that there are deep affinities, and perhaps the deepest between him and others who belong to other fellowships, and are called by other names. He will find himself inwardly tied to those from whom he is outwardly divided. The teachers who speak to him most commandingly will often be of a seemingly alien company. Is he then to renounce them or disown them? Far otherwise. He is to recognise that besides his fellowship in the outward Church, which may mean more or less, he has a still more precious communion in the Holy Assembly" (*The Garden of Nuts*, p. 73).

Herein we perceive a third value in Mysticism, as we brood over the sharp conflicts of the hour. Mysticism emphasises a higher unity and a deeper fellowship; twin realities of the Eternal world in a life of Time. Mysticism affirms that even here, amid the tumult and the shouting, we may find the green pastures and the still waters.

It would be possible, in considerations of this character, to introduce many names as illustrating the ideal. We might think of Clement of Alexandria, with his brave affirmation that "there is one river of Truth, but many streams fall into it on this side and on that"; but there is one name that seems to demand consideration, namely,

Frederick Denison Maurice. While he was still alive, Archdeacon Hare testified that no man had done so much to reconcile the reason and the conscience of thoughtful men of the age to the faith of the Church. Holding no high preferment in the Established Church, he laboured for fifty years as a mediator of religious difficulties. During his lifetime he came in contact with almost every shade of religious opinion in England, and thus came to dwell in a common household of faith. While he accepted the doctrine of the inner light, he did not despise the sacraments, or those outward forms of religion which are dear to many hearts. He could study the standpoint of every denomination, and feel that each stood for an important aspect of the whole Truth as it was in Jesus, and never could he be brought to admit that any one denomination was exclusively right. Dr. A. V. G. Allen says of him : “ The Holy Spirit appeared to him as the actually existing bond of every unity, whether domestic, or social, or ecclesiastical—a Spirit which united men by bringing them into the fellowship of the Father and the Son ; which spake by the prophets, but also in the conscience and higher reason of man ; who inspired the writers of the sacred books, but a Spirit also without Whose constant presence and inspiration, no man could think or perform those things that are good.

Through his connection with the Evangelical Churches, Maurice learned to identify the Gospel of Christ with the deliverance from sin and guilt. He remained at heart an Evangelical all his days, but he also widened the range of Christ's redemptive work, till it included all other deliverances, from every form of oppression and tyranny, whether ecclesiastical, political, or social " (*Prophets of the Christian Faith*, p. 210).

Those who have discovered the secret of the inward way, will also discover, as the days come and go, that there is a deeper love than a mere outward profession ; a love which hopeth all things, beareth all things, and believeth all things ; and against such love there is no law.

PART IV

THE PRACTICE OF MYSTICISM

- I. THE CHRISTIAN PULPIT
- II. THE PRAYER CHAMBER
- III. THE MISSION FIELD

We speak God's wisdom in a mystery.—ST. PAUL.

The chief practical use of Mysticism is to help Christian preachers to deepen their teaching—to preach Christ in a mystery.—W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

I rejoice that I have avoided controversy, and this I owe to Lyell, who many years ago, in reference to my geological works, strongly advised me never to get entangled in a controversy, as it rarely did any good, and caused a miserable waste of time and temper.—CHARLES DARWIN.

Of Mysticism I would desire to speak with warm but discriminating appreciation. To our own age the message of Mysticism should be of great value. On the one side it is a valuable corrective to the gaudy materialism that finds expression in so many forms ; and on the other side it should give depth to our presentation of the Gospel, which is too often disastrously superficial.—ARTHUR S. PEAKE.

It will not do simply to say, the authority is God. The Mysticism here must be the historic Mysticism of positive and redeeming revelation.—P. T. FORSYTH.

Christ means something great, something overwhelming, something Divine and all-sufficient only for the man who is dissatisfied with himself ; who has aimed at righteousness, and now, to his shame and grief, stands self-convicted of failure. You cannot see the beauty of the glowing cathedral window from without ; to behold the splendour and the miracle you must stoop and enter ; and in like manner Christ remains unintelligible and valueless to all save those who, under the constraint of righteousness, have dared to pass with Him into the sanctuary of conscience. To know for certain Who Christ is, we must first have gathered ourselves up in a genuine moral effort, and been brave enough to look straight and clear at the facts of our own character and of the moral universe.

—H. R. MACKINTOSH.

Christianity is Christ.—GEORGE MATHESON.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHRISTIAN PULPIT

WHEN we come to consider the practice of Christian Mysticism in the Christian pulpit, we have to remember that the mystic is fully persuaded with John Robinson that "the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His holy Word." If we notice carefully that the light and truth are to break forth *from* the Word, we shall be saved from any extravagances of thought. The Word has been given. The truth has been embodied in Living Flesh and Living Speech. As Westcott has remarked : " Christ the Word, the Son of God, is Himself the Gospel. The Incarnation, the Nativity, the Transfiguration, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, are the final and absolute revelation to man of God's nature and will. These facts contain implicitly under the conditions of earth, all that we can know of self, the world, and God, so far as that knowledge affects our religious life." And while we do not anticipate another revelation, we do expect more " light to shine along the road that leads us to the Lamb." We do

expect to put away childish things when we have become men. In this chapter we may think of the attitude of the Christian mystic to the Holy Scriptures, and to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) As we have already observed, the Christian mystic is in quest of the spirit rather than the letter of life, and this attitude is plainly revealed with regard to the *Holy Scriptures*.

He is not particularly enthusiastic over the many problems of authorship, date and purpose that call forth so much discussion. He does not fly into a nervous panic when a critic suggests that the twenty-third psalm is post-exilic; nor does the fourth Gospel lose its power because Christian scholars are divided in their views as to its author. "The mystic as such is not profoundly concerned in the quarrel, and he can wait with calmness the far-off day of decision" (*The Garden of Nuts*, p. 57). He knows in his heart that while the grass may wither and the flower fade, yet the Word will abide for ever. It goes without saying that the mystic is very suspicious of phrases and definitions which, while helpful enough in their way, seem to suggest a doctrinal finality. He does not question that the Bible contains an infallible revelation utterly binding on the soul who perceives it; but he uses descriptive terms and phrases with great care, inasmuch as he

realises the unique origins of the Book. And while he believes with Westcott that if inspiration is to mean anything at all it must mean verbal inspiration, he nevertheless reserves to himself the right to interpret the scope of the word "verbal" according to his own judgment. In regard to the doctrine of Holy Scripture, it may be said with confidence that the Christian mystic is here also the apostle of the middle way. He carries light and healing and spiritual certainty to those whose reason has been handicapped by the ultra-conservative school, and to those whose faith has been shaken by the assumptions of the ultra-radical school. When he thinks of the latter school, he realises, as Sir W. Robertson Nicoll has pointed out, that criticism has changed and will change. The most notable illustration of this truth is to be found in the utter collapse of the Tübingen School, and, in spite of Dr Peake's fervent assurances to the contrary, there seems no valid reason why the Grafian school should not go the same way of collapse. In regard to the New Testament, the reader is advised to read Dr. M'Clymont's Baird Lecture, "New Testament Criticism ; its History and Results" (1914), for numerous illustrations of this process of change. But the point to be emphasised here is that the mystic does not fly into a panic on account of criticism, however advanced, nor does he use his

pulpit for the discussion of critical negations. "The Christian pulpit can never be strong so far as it depends on nervous and inaccurate estimates of the present trend of German theological thought, measured in most instances by summaries of periodical articles. The mystic knows very well that the time for decision on many questions has not yet arrived, and that it may never arrive. To assume that the particular conclusions which are favoured by the majority of scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century will be equally in favour at the beginning of the twenty-first, is to be blind to all the lessons of experience. Criticism has changed and will change, but to the mystic the Word of God remains" (*The Garden of Nuts*, p. 57).

When the mystic thinks of the ultra-conservative school, he remembers that when all has been said that can be said, the half has not been told. The one justification for so many new books on religious subjects is simply that every human mind has some fresh contribution to make to our interpretation of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is because Christ is universal that it requires a universe to interpret Him. But so many earnest men in the ultra-conservative school have closed their Bibles with an air of finality; their minds are firmly made up in respect of certain passages, and with regard to particular conclusions. They have

come to a standstill, and they forget that the faith once for all delivered to the saints is capable of a variety of interpretations. Indeed, the same fact is equally true of the Higher Critics, who, in their oft-repeated assertions regarding "assured results," seem also to have come to a standstill. If conservatives are deserving of rebuke in respect of excessive confidence in their own interpretations, it is not less the case with the Critics themselves. They are just as intolerant as the most determined conservatives. It is for spiritually-minded students to show that two wrongs do not make a right, and it should be the privilege of the consecrated to set forth the true ethics of controversy. In this relation, the words of John Henry Newman are worth recalling, although it should be noted that in his Lectures and *Apologia* he did not always observe his own laws: "The true gentleman carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast ; all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling ; all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment ; his great concern being to make everyone at their ease and at home. He has eyes on all his company ; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments,

or insinuates evil which he dare not speak out." It is true, of course, that this intolerant spirit of defence has been called forth to some extent by the aggravating methods of certain critics, but it cannot be emphasised too strongly that two wrongs do not make a right. The secret of Dr. Alexander Whyte's pulpit power is to be found in the fact that he has *lived* as though he believed the Bible to be the Word of the Living God. He has been gracious to those who have seemed advanced to an unwise degree, and he has been gentle with those whose enthusiasm for the science of criticism has led them to conclusions which appear untenable. The present writer once ventured to speak in terms of admiration of the characters of certain eminent Scottish theologians, who happened to be Higher Critics, when the great mystic solemnly interrupted him by saying—almost in rebuke: "Sir, these men are great and humble followers of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Christian pulpit would gain immeasurably if preachers would emulate the positive preaching of Dr. Whyte, and reserve purely critical matters for a more suitable occasion.

The Christian mystic treads the *via media*. It is enough for him that the Lord has spoken, and spoken to him. When he reads the Old Testament he is more impressed with the timeless significance of the words than he is with the mere historical

interest. He finds a message and a meaning behind the generally accepted exposition. Indeed, his chief concern is experimental rather than exegetical. "What was the unknown writer of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah thinking of when he wrote his prophecy? Did he think of a person or of collective Israel? It does not matter. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah refers to Christ. Nothing is settled by the intention of the writer, even if that could be ascertained" (*The Garden of Nuts*, p. 63).

There is really no other way in which the Bible can become a potent book in the Christian ministry. It is only as the soul hears the Eternal Voice in every part of Scripture, that the Bible can be vital for the soul. Past, present and future are one, and the words that Jesus speaks are words of spirit and words of life. This is the reason why the mystic can open his Bible almost at random and never be sent empty away. He finds Christ in Moses and Isaiah and Malachi, and hears his own soul sobbing in Psalm fifty-one. He believes with Martin Luther, that the only effective way of reading the Bible is in a right use of the personal pronouns; together with the belief that the promises of God are made unto the soul who hears them. The value of this attitude in the Christian pulpit will clearly be recognised by those who have been called to the holy office of preaching. In the

pulpit it is the opened Scriptures that produce the burning heart, and the Scriptures are not opened until the Master speaks. It may be a great achievement to give elaborate discourses on the historical setting of a passage, and a rare art to set forth the actual exegesis of a text ; but men are crying out for *life*—"more life and fuller"—and until the preacher has got behind the local meaning to the eternal significance, the winds of a noble inspiration will tarry. Happy indeed is the preacher who has proved the Word to be living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword !

(2) From the many books that are published dealing with the *Person of the Lord Jesus Christ*, it would seem that no theme of theology is so profoundly interesting to the reverent mind. In this connection, Professor H. R. Mackintosh makes an admission which is worthy of careful attention : "Not long since the present writer had occasion to read an article on Jesus, in a scholarly, new encyclopædia of religion, the author of which, coming finally to mention the best literature, protested that out of the vast multitude of books, he could name only an insignificant and fragmentary selection. Then two closely printed columns were filled with books of all sorts and sizes—biographies of Jesus, controversial treatises, special studies, books on the words of Jesus, on the character of

Jesus, on His life, on His birth, on His death and Resurrection—most of them published within the last *eight* years. Thousands of teachers teach about Jesus every day. Hundreds of preachers proclaim His Gospel. If a modern theme could be named, that theme is Jesus Christ" (*The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 10).

What is the reason of this prolific output? Is it not found in the solemn truth that when we have written all we know about Jesus, we have hardly touched the hem of His garment? The Christian mystic, while paying due heed to those historical facts on which a true Christology must ever rest, nevertheless feels as he approaches the study of Christ, that he sees through a glass darkly. And he feels with the late Dr. Fairbairn that if he sees Christ more clearly than even the early Christians did, it is only because he stands on their shoulders.

When we turn to the writings of St. Paul, we are not long in discovering that he was awed, subdued, exultant, by reason of the wonder, the glory and the mystery of the Person of Jesus. No man, perhaps, in the New Testament, was more impressed with the mystery of Christ than the great Apostle himself. And we do not escape from this conclusion by saying with some, that St. Paul was unduly influenced by the Mystery-Religions with which he was surrounded. Professor Kennedy

has shown conclusively that the Christian revelation to the Apostle was independent of, and different from the pagan myths of a Græco-Oriental philosophy.

When he describes the great renunciation to the Philippians—in the fiercely argued *kenotic* passage—it is evident that he is speaking the Word of God in a mystery. “Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men” (ii. 6). It is a humbling thought that even those who seek a way of escape from this aspect of the mystery by adopting a thorough-going *kenosis*, are not by any means free from grave and insoluble problems. The words of the late Dr. Dale are still pertinent: “The whole subject is profoundly mysterious; but while we must reverently acknowledge that we are unable to comprehend it, we may, without irreverence, criticise any human explanation of it. What then, it may be asked, on the theory of the *kenosis*, became of those Divine powers and qualities which the Eternal Son of God renounced, laid aside, when He became incarnate? Did they cease to be, during the three-and-thirty years of His earthly life? Did they once more begin to be when that earthly life was ended? Or, if they continued to be during the interval, how is it conceivable that

powers and qualities could exist apart from the Person to Whom they belonged ? ” (*Christian Doctrine*, p. 311).

How can we expect to answer such questions when we are in such pathetic ignorance of our own personality ? For, in spite of the Delphic oracle, man knows but little of himself, and the little he does know mystifies him beyond words. What can we say, then, as we approach the Mystery of Christ ? Alas for those who think to say the last word ! The Philippian passage reminds us of the tremendous truth contained in the Incarnation of Jesus ; but what does that Incarnation involve ? Professor Peake sums up the difficulties of the situation in a series of eloquent questions : “ What are the conditions of His being ? What surrender and mutual accommodation did the union demand ? Was the union effected in a moment, or did it take the form of a process ? What was the relation of the Incarnate Christ to the cosmic functions of the Son of God ? How was the life of the Godhead affected by the entrance of the Son into the conditions of humanity, and again, by His return to the Father ? ” (*The Bible*, p. 425).

We can only say that Christ transcends our highest thought, while He claims our deepest obedience. And yet such a conclusion does not leave the heart unrested. St. Paul is not depressed

on account of those things which cannot be shaken. In the epistle to the Ephesians, iii. 3, he speaks of his understanding in "the mystery of Christ;" in iii. 9, he refers to his call to preach unto the Gentiles "the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God, Who created all things;" in v. 32, he affirms that "this mystery is great; but I speak in regard of Christ and of His Church;" in vi. 19, he asks prayer that "utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel;" in the epistle to the Colossians, ii. 2, he says how greatly he longs that those at Laodicea may have their hearts comforted, "they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden;" in 1 Timothy iii. 9, he says that deacons must be grave, "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience;" in iii. 16, he declares that "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness," and then proceeds to refer to Christ: "Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Such passages seem to suggest

that the very mystery of Christ served as an inspiration for faith. Because we know so little, we should not live as though we knew nothing. There are some things surely believed among us. The fact that we are awed by the mystery of Christ does not mean that we are in any uncertainty, for example, about His Resurrection.

The simple conclusion at which we arrive is that Christian preachers are "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 *Corinthians iv. 1*) ; and we feel that no creed, no catechism, however thorough-going, can exhaust the wonder of Christ's great glory. "Our little systems have their day," but He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The Christian mystic is conscious that although eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, they are revealed by His Spirit.

Can we say precisely in what the mystery of Christ consists? It is not possible to name any one phase of the truth, for there is hardly a single element in our Lord's Person which is not profoundly mysterious. As we have been reminded by Dr. Dale, no intellectual statement can explain satisfactorily how personality can be divested of its inherent qualities. No purely intellectual statement can cover the truth of the Virgin Birth, or the possibility of temptation in a perfectly sinless

nature, or the union of two natures in one person. Perhaps we are receiving gleams of light through the newer psychology, but even then, we are still in the region of mystery. Nevertheless, these things have been revealed unto us by the Spirit. We have learned to trust where we cannot trace, and we have an assurance in our hearts that Christ is all men have declared Him to be—and infinitely more. Wherefore we preach Christ in a mystery. The sense of wonder is ever in our hearts, and the accent of urgency ever in our speech. For the same Spirit Who reveals truth to the soul is the Spirit "Who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 *Corinthians* ii. 10).

But the supreme mystery of Christ, it would seem, has to do with His Redeeming activity. Professor Loofs says that the great mystery is that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. No intellect can fully grasp all that means, and no theologian can exhaust its profound and cosmic significance. Well may St. Peter declare that the angels desire to steal a glance into the sufferings of Jesus. Again we are humbled as we remember that no theory of the Atonement can exhaust the mystery of the Cross. There are those who advocate the Atonement as a Substitution, and no careful reader of the New Testament can deny the substitutionary element in the death of Christ; others

proclaim it as a Representation, and no unbiassed student of Pauline theology can deny the representative value of the Cross ; others, yet again, and chiefly those to whom mystical thought is precious, declare that Calvary implies an Identification, and with our faith founded on Galatians ii. 20, we are compelled to admit the validity of the claim. And yet, as Dr. Hastings has pointed out, " Our Lord was never weary of telling us, when He came, that He came as the Son of our Father, and that all He did, the Father did in Him. He made clear that He was no outsider, but bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He made clear that He came not only as the Father's Son, but as the Son of Man. He came not as Substitute simply, but as Representative, and that, not by arbitrary choice, as one of a rebel regiment might be chosen to suffer for the sins of the whole regiment, but as actually Himself the regiment, so made one with us that humanity is comprehended in Him. He is more than our Substitute, He is more than our Representative. He is identified with us."

Standing before the Cross as humble penitents, we may well wonder how our fathers could have fought as they did for particular interpretations of the Mystery of the Cross. It seems the most revolting sacrilege that men should have quarrelled with each other around the Bloody Rood. The Cross to

the mystic is the place of willing identification, not the centre of wasteful controversy. He sings with great love the penitent's confession :

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear ;
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

The author of *The Garden of Nuts*, in dealing with the mystical interpretation of the Atonement, gives a remarkable quotation from "the great modern teacher of substitution, the apostle Spurgeon." In a sermon on *The Miraculous Darkness*, Mr. Spurgeon says that the Passion is a great mystery into which we cannot pry, and then he uses these notable words : " I try to explain it as a substitution, and I feel that where the language of Scripture is explicit, I may and must be explicit too. But yet I feel that the idea of substitution does not cover the whole of the matter, and that no human conception can completely grasp the whole of the dread mystery. It was wrought in darkness, because the full, far-reaching meaning and result cannot be beheld of finite mind. Tell me the death of the Lord Jesus was a grand example of self-sacrifice—I can see that and much more. Tell me it was the bearing of what ought to have been borne by myriads of sinners in the human race, as the chastisement of their sin—I can see that, and

found my best hope upon it. *But do not tell me that this is all that is in the Cross.*"

The reconciling activity of God is all men have declared it to be ; but it is much more. Enough for us that in the wounds of Christ we have found our peace, that by His stripes we have been healed, and that through His death *we* have passed from death unto life. And while the Mystery will remain till time shall be no more, we can rest in His arms, and lay our weary heads upon His breast, for He has come close to us and spoken with us, so that even now, the Mystery tends to become luminous to the humble soul. It cannot be pointed out too definitely, that it is the function of the Christian preacher to preach Christ crucified ; to *declare* the fact, even though he is aware that he knows little about its ultimate significance. For although he may have to preach Christ in a mystery, the Spirit of Light and peace will reveal Him in majesty, to those souls who watch and pray.

When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

—THE MASTER.

O Lord, how utterly different are Thy thoughts from our thoughts ! From a soul which is firmly resolved to love Thee alone, and which has surrendered her whole will into Thy hands, Thou demandest only that she should hearken, strive earnestly to serve Thee, and desire only to promote thine honour. She need seek and choose no path, for Thou doest that for her, and her will follows Thine ; while Thou, O Lord, takest care to bring her to fuller perfection.—ST. TERESA.

Man, if thou desirest a noble and holy life, and unceasingly prayest to God for it, if thou continue constant in this desire, it will be granted unto thee without fail, even if only in the day or hour of thy death ; and if God should not give it thee then, thou shalt find it in Him in eternity, of this be assured.

—ST. BERNARD.

How mighty, how wonderful a thing is prayer ! That man has yet to appear in the world who shall prove to the utmost what prayer can accomplish.—JOHN FOSTER.

*And when my thought is all astray,
Yet think Thou on in me,
That with the new-born innocent day
My soul rise fresh and free.*

*Nor let me wander all in vain,
Through dreams that mock and flee ;
But even in visions of the brain,
Go wandering towards Thee.*

—GEORGE MACDONALD.

Prayer on our part is the highest aspiration of the soul.

—TENNYSON.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRAYER CHAMBER

THE practice of Mysticism in the prayer-chamber is well illustrated in one of Fénelon's letters : " When we love God, we do not ask what we shall say to Him. We have no difficulty in conversing with a friend. Our hearts are open to him. We do not think what we are to say to him, but say it without reflection. We cannot be reserved. Even when we have nothing to say to him, we are satisfied with being with him." The faith of a Christian mystic includes the possibility of prayer without intermission (1 *Thessalonians* v. 17).

Dr. Abelson, in discussing the early elements in Jewish Mysticism, suggests that the Fatherhood of God is the basic conception of all Mysticism, inasmuch as in all its phases and stages it " assumes the possibility of communion with some One Who, while greater and more powerful than ourselves, is at the same time loving, and benevolent, and personally interested in us. You can only feel love towards One Who, you know, has loved you first " (*Jewish Mysticism*, p. 16). With this thought

in mind, we turn our thoughts to the mystic's ladder of prayer. And when in thought we have reached the sublime height of union with God, we shall agree with Dr. Abelson that "only the mystic mood is the true prayerful mood" (*ut supra*, p. 23).

(1) The first stage is very elementary, although it is true that some souls never go beyond it. It is that stage when the soul cries out for help, and craves some external good. Sometimes, as in the case of the disciples, it is an anguished cry: "Lord, save, or we perish." But always it is bound up, either with the deliverance from some external evil, or with the acquirement of some positive good. Thus men pray in the hour of need, that the ship may not sink, that the little child may not die, that the impending catastrophe may be averted, that adversity may cease, that prosperity may begin. It is the stage of *asking* for material good, whether in the nature of a negative deliverance, or a positive acquirement. Although it is only the first stage, it is nevertheless a legitimate phase of prayer. Our Lord has encouraged us to ask for those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul. No theory of natural law should rob us of that child-like spirit, which asks for a gift, even of a temporal and material character. All that is contended here, is simply that this stage of prayer is only the beginning of the steep ascent.

Even those who are far from fellowship with God are constrained to cry out for Divine help, when they think of their children in distress, or their dear ones in danger.

The truly surprising thing is that so many earnest Christians pray as though this were the summit of the prayer-life. By prayer they mean little more than the genius of asking. They come to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, Who has promised to supply all their needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, and they ask for those things that are pressing and urgent. But rarely do they enter upon the life of prayer where wants are forgotten in a larger liberty and a more spiritual communion.

(2) The second phase of prayer is usually the result of a quickened sense of sin. It expresses itself in the well-known cry: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Sometimes it is the result of a haunting fear that somewhere there is "Someone ready to take His due." A fear of future retribution still drives men to cry for mercy, and leads them to a kind of repentance. Yet again, this phase of prayer is sometimes the result of an uneasy feeling that sin is related to domestic misfortune. Very often a bad man will be constrained to charge himself with the misery of those near and dear to him. The present writer recalls a sorrowful instance

in connection with his own work. A working man gave his heart to Christ, and a few weeks after, while he was at Church, his little child was burned to death. At once there arose a thought in his mind that somehow or another he was related to the catastrophe, as he pathetically inquired: "What have I done that this should befall my child?" We are familiar with similar instances. Few things cause more heart-searching in the average man than the presence of innocent suffering, and few things are more purifying. It is a great advance, therefore, to come to this stage. As Dr. George Steven has well said: "In the second stage there may be present in the mind a fear of punishment and little more, or a fear of exposure. At any rate the man is . . . dealing with God; he has come into God's presence; his danger or his sin has brought him there. To God he has not come, perhaps, for God's sake, but only for his own; still he *has* come, and that is much" (*The Psychology of the Christian Soul*, p. 289).

(3) The third stage marks a further advance. It is a cry for positive goodness. After crying out for the forgiveness of sin, there arises a longing for something better. It may be that the soul has seen a vision, or dreamed a dream, or read a book, or felt the contagion of a noble personality. Compared with this possibility, nothing else seems to

matter. It is the stage when the soul affirms : " One thing have I desired of the Lord ; that will I seek after." Positive righteousness is now desired as a thing of beauty. The soul is no longer content with negative goodness, but longs for positive holiness. No longer can he be satisfied with the absence of sinful habits ; he craves to have the presence of spiritual deeds. This is considerably in advance of the earlier stages, and yet, although it seems so high that some will say " I cannot attain unto it," it must be pointed out that the element of selfishness is still in the prayer-life. Few things are so appealing as the deliberate search for holiness, and yet few things can be so perilous. Why does the soul desire to be pure in heart, poor in spirit, hungry and thirsty of soul ? Introspection may become morbid, but these questions have to be faced. Sometimes these very gifts are required for purely artistic purposes. Those who are refined in their thinking know there is nothing so ugly as sin, and nothing so inartistic as vice. At the same time, they know there is nothing so beautiful as purity and humility. Therefore there arises within their hearts a great longing for the beautiful. This, indeed, is a great and noble height, and beyond it very few Christians go ; and yet for the Christian mystic there is a further stage, a stage which seems almost impossible on earth, and yet which, if

realised, becomes the very Holy of Holies to the trusting soul.

(4) It is that stage of prayer where the soul is at home in the Oversoul, where man thinks his thoughts after God. It involves the utter surrender of the will, and implies an experience wherein the soul takes up the Divine will with enthusiasm, and adopts it as his own will. The ideal has been expressed by Rabbi Gamaliel: "O Lord, grant that I may do Thy will as if it were my will, that Thou mayest do my will as if it were Thy will."

Few phrases for the average man are less attractive than "the will of God." The will of God is confused with some harsh inexorable Fate, in fighting which, man is ground to powder. So, with a kind of despair, man makes up his mind to put up with what cannot be avoided. If he sings, "Thy will be done," he does so very mournfully, and all the time he cherishes a secret conviction that were the events of life in his own hands, he could arrange a much more satisfactory programme. Here the faith of the Christian mystic is a helpful challenge. As in everything else, the supreme Ideal is Christ Himself; and the motto of His life was: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Such a sacred confession sets the blessed will of God in a clearer light. It is not something that we must bear with extreme reluctance; but

something that must become part and parcel of our life and action. God's will must become our will ; God's thoughts must become our thoughts ; God's desires must become our desires. When this goal is reached the soul has outgrown such a phrase as "unanswered prayer," because only those things are desired which God has first desired we should have. Julian of Norwich has set forth this idea very strikingly : "But, our Lord said to me, 'I am the ground of thy beseechings ; first, it is My will that thou have it ; and then I make thee to wish for it ; and then I make thee to beseech for it, and thou beseechest it. How then should it be that thou shouldest not have thy beseeching ? ' For it is most impossible that we should beseech mercy and grace and not have it. For all things that our good Lord maketh us to beseech, Himself hath ordained them to us from without beginning" (*Revelations of Divine Love*, p. 84).

At this stage, prayer has become effectual as well as fervent. It is a stage which is reached after much bruising and after much darkness. Before the stage is reached, the heavens seem made of stubborn brass, and the ear of God is heavy. But when this blissful union of wills has taken place, then is fulfilled an ancient word : "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." It is in this way that the soul prays

without intermission ; God is never so far off as even to be nigh ; and although the soul may have no language, God hears the thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

This view of prayer is something loftier than mere resignation ; something deeper than bearing adversity with a good grace. It is a positive enthusiasm for the will of God whatever that will may include ; a spiritual determination to look out upon the world through the Divine eyes ; and a holy longing to be so utterly one with God, that His Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. It is the Higher Pantheism of Tennyson :—

God is Law, say the wise,
O soul, and let us rejoice.
For if He thunder by law,
The thunder is yet His voice.
Speak to Him thou, for He hears,
And Spirit with spirit can meet ;
Closer is He than breathing,
And nearer than hands and feet,

What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you. The God that made the world and all things therein, He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; neither is He served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He Himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things ; and He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation ; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us ; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being ; as certain even of your own poets have said, " For we are also His offspring."

—ST. PAUL.

In a Higher Presence than that of human intellect or its results, we render thanks for a gracious system which can enlighten and comfort simple hearts which could make nothing of metaphysics. In the true philosophy, the grand Positivism of Christianity, there is rest at last ; and rest within the reach of all.—A. K. H. B.

So far as my knowledge of real Christianity goes, no human being was ever either reasoned into Christianity or reasoned out of it. I believe that no man was ever saved by a process of ratiocination. It is as the result of the direct, personal intervention of the Spirit of God in the soul, by a Divine illumination, by a revelation of Christ, that men are brought back again to God and their Father.—HUGH PRICE HUGHES.

What is Islam ? The religion of nomadic tribes that, when they forsake the desert, waste civilization. What is Brahmanism ? The religion of an iron caste that confines as in an inflexible mould a society that cannot escape from its iron and immovable casement. What is Buddhism ? A religion that emasculates, that enervates men. . . . But where stands Christ ? At the head of the peoples that lead the civilization of the world, reigning with greatest power where the peoples are most free ; most honoured where the knowledge is widest.—A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MISSION FIELD

IN his concluding survey of the *Types of English Piety*, Mr. Coats, while admitting that Mysticism is "valuable as a spirit suffusing all the Churches," observes that it "tends to reduce Christianity, either to an esoteric secret known only to the initiated, or else to that universal reason which there is no need to communicate or proclaim abroad, since its light already shineth in every human heart" (p. 249). Such words would imply that there is little place for the practice of Mysticism on the mission field. And yet, when we come to consider the facts of the situation, we are forced to see that Mysticism, with its spiritual simplicity and its experimental Catholicity, may be of the greatest service to those who labour in the regions beyond.

At the outset, let it be observed that Miss Underhill writes more hopefully in this connection. She suggests that our Lord, in "His passionate efforts to express and make plain His unequalled intuition of the Eternal order," poured the "new wine of

perfect experience of God into the old bottle of Jewish apocalyptic "; and, while we may hesitate to go quite so far, we shall be disposed to agree with Miss Underhill when she says of St. Paul: "The Christian missionary became for Paul not a herald of the Last Things, but an initiator into the Mystic Way, the parent of a new life. His Churches were his spiritual family, for which he 'travailed in birth'; that they might be re-born, as he hoped, into the kingdom of Reality. He is the typical Christian mystic of the second generation, and performed the necessary function of spreading the news, scattering the seed, that it might reach those capable of receiving it" (*The Mystic Way*, p. 213).

This reference to the Apostle leads us to enquire what is the true missionary ideal? What is the real inspiration of our service? What is the purpose of going to Africa, and India, and China, and the Islands of the Seas? There are those whose appeal would be along the line of final judgment; who write of the three million heathen who die every month 'out of Christ.' There is doubtless a strong appeal in such a line of approach, but surely to press such a view unduly is to be blind to the great glory of the Gospel, which is an eternal life in the midst of time. Dr. Jowett, in *The Epistles of St. Peter*, has a searching passage on this thought:

“Where are we if the motive of our missions and ministry is to save people from the fires of hell? Apart altogether from salvation from torment, is the Master Himself worth knowing? Supposing we could now be assured that every soul in the heathen world would be hereafter rescued from the torments of hell, is there nothing in our Gospel which shapes itself into an urgent and all-constraining evangel? Seek out some ripe old saint, who has deep and intimate intercourse with the Lord; let her open her heart to you about the glories of her faith; and you will discover that the word ‘hell’ has dropped out of her vocabulary. She is so absorbed in the glories of her Lord, so possessed by the delights of daily companionship, so engaged in carrying her own God-given comfort to the sorrows of others, that the house of torments has no place in her heart. If you ask her the nature of the evangel she carries about with her, this will be her reply:—

God only knows the love of God;
Oh that it now were shed abroad
In every human heart!

The real missionary motive is not to save from hell, but to reveal the Christ; not to save from a peril, but to proclaim and create a glorious companionship. Here is the marrow of the controversy, concentrated into one pressing question: *Is it of*

infinite moment to know Christ now? Assume that there are now men and women in the heathen world who are to remain upon the earth for the next twenty years, and it is in our power to make those twenty years a season of hallowed fellowship with the Lord, is it worth the doing? " (p. 145).

The Christian mystic has received the Gospel as a great fact of experience; He has discovered One Who is the Way back to God; He has found, moreover, a mystic kinship with all those who seek the upward way, and if he is higher up the hill than they, it is only that he may lend a beckoning hand. As soon as we are persuaded that the new life is worth while in the Here and Now, we shall be filled with a great yearning to communicate the good news to those who sit in the shadow of a darkness which is worse than death. Far from Mysticism tending to a reduction of true Christianity, it magnifies the possibilities of humanity in Christ.

In what ways may Mysticism be of practical value on the Mission Field? Three replies may be suggested.

(1) In the first place, Christian Mysticism, as we have seen, emphasises the truth that man is no alien product on the face of the earth, no child without a history; and consequently it recognises *the universal search for God*. Pascal was not far from the truth when he declared that every man

is incurably religious, and it is the task of the mystic to guide that instinct into the way of peace. It is significant that there is no country in the world without a religion of some kind, and in no race is the religious instinct wholly dormant, for in no soul has God left Himself without a witness. The standing wonder is that we can be so unmoved as we sing :—

The heathen in his blindness,
Bows down to wood and stone.

In thus recognising this universal search for God, the Missionary has something upon which to work. In the wildest part of the world he may know that in the heart of the worst savage—buried and built over though it be—there is the Divine Spark. And immediately—as in the case of St. Paul at Athens—there is a link between the actual and the potential. “What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you.” From some points of view, such words are startling. They assume that the search was honest, that the instinct was sincere, although the worship was ignorant; and they suggest an adjustment, a re-direction of soul.

(2) In the second place, it is noteworthy that St. Paul made use of a quotation from a pagan poet when he addressed the men of Athens. It is suggestive of very much, and points to the *broken*

light of a revelation. Of every heathen faith is it true that it is a "broken light" of God. The value of this conception seems to consist in the fact that the missionary may, in difficult circumstances, find a point of contact. It is possible to set forth some of the ideals of the heathen faith, and show how in Christ Jesus the highest aspirations of men in every age and clime have been realised. The whole difficulty in modern missions is the persistency on the part of some to be parochial. We have been almost afraid to say that even the most primitive faith may be able to contribute a gem for the Redeemer's crown.

This parochialism is partly due to the conceit of the Western world, and partly due to a false view of the Christian faith. We are so thoroughly assured that the standpoint of the Western world is the correct one, that we are disposed to regard it as universal. We imagine that what we think to-day, the East should think to-morrow. But while the East has been ready to take Western learning second-hand, it has shown a stubborn reluctance to take its religion second-hand. Indeed, it is an impossibility. And in this connection it may be true to say with Kipling, that "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." But the Christian mystic is not so eager for the East to meet the West, as he is for the East to meet

God, even though it approach Him along those distinctively Eastern avenues of the spirit. The very fact that there is a false Mysticism in India, for example, offers a greater opportunity to the true ; and the fact that Mrs. Besant has made a tremendous appeal with a theosophic Mysticism should offer an encouragement to those of us who believe in a *Christocentric* Mysticism. We must take things as they are, and seek to find a point of contact with minds that are far removed from our own in respect of learning, tradition and religion.

Readers of *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*, will remember the striking story with which Dr. Dale opens the chapter on "The direct appeal of Christ to the spirit of man." He says that he once entertained a Japanese gentleman who had become a Christian. At night, when the house was still, he enquired of his guest the reason for the change, reminding him of the great gulf that separated his countrymen from the traditions of Christendom. This was the convert's answer : "I was a Confucian, and I studied the works of Confucius for many years. One thing at last perplexed me. Confucius often speaks of all good things as coming down from 'heaven.' Sometimes he speaks as if by 'heaven' he meant a living and benignant Person, who consciously bestows blessings on mankind. In other parts of his writings it seems plain

that this cannot be his meaning. But the thought came to me that, perhaps, there is a great and mighty and kindly Person above us, and this excited me. I wanted to know whether it was true; and if it was, I wanted to learn all that could be learnt about Him. With this anxiety in my mind, I listened to the lectures of many learned men on the doctrine of Confucius, but did not find what I wanted. At last I heard a famous Japanese philosopher who was hostile to Confucianism, and was delivering a course of critical lectures on it. His lectures made me more dissatisfied with the system than ever. Just then a Japanese convert to Christianity gave me a Chinese Bible, and asked me to read it. He told me that the translation was a great achievement of scholarship, and that I should be charmed with its literary beauty. I found that he was right; the translation is admirable. I read page after page till I came to the thirteenth chapter of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, beginning, 'If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.' I read the whole chapter. I was arrested, fascinated. I had never seen or heard or dreamt of a morality like *that*. I felt that it was above the reach of the human race, that it must have come from heaven, that the man who wrote that chapter must have received light from

God—from God, about Whose existence I had been speculating. And then I read the Gospel of John, and the words of Christ filled me with wonder. They were not to be resisted. I could not refuse Him my faith.” And so he became a Christian.

There certainly does seem a sense in which some aspects of heathen faiths have been preparing a way for the Lord, and the mystic will be quick to perceive such indications.

(3) In the third place, Christian Mysticism has a value for the mission field, in its emphasis on *the nearness of the Lord*. Again we think of the Apostle at Athens. “That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.” Does any one doubt the power of such a statement? After searching for God in wood and stone, in sun and moon, in “temples made with hands,” at last to be told that He is not far, but *near*; to be informed that *in* Him we live, and move and *are*. How sweetly does the Gospel message link on here; for God has come near to us in Christ Jesus our Lord, stooped to the woes of our common life, opened His heart to the iron of our sin, felt the bitterest wound of our transgression. And thus we are not long before we come to a positive message of redeeming activity; we can tell of a God Who sent not His

prophet, but His well-beloved Son ; Who speaks to man not in the earthquake, not in the wind, not in the fire ; but with a voice of gentle stillness within the breast ; Who confirms in the heart what He declares in the Word.

The missionary is the initiator of a new life in grace. He is concerned about the possibilities of the Now ; and while his message and his ministry are bound to affect the unknown ages of eternity, they will pre-eminently touch the spirit of man in the experience of Time. And surely no servant of Christ can desire anything more inspiring than the task of introducing those who *exist*, to the eternal *life* which is life indeed.

It goes without saying that the Christian mystic abroad, while duly loyal to the Church of his adoption, will nevertheless cherish tender thoughts of that Holy Catholic Assembly, the Church of the first-born. He will be a slave to no sect and take no private road ; he will seek ever to promote the unity of Spirit in the bonds of peace. And with joyful steps he will pursue his way, watching for the dawning of that Advent, when the King of Saints, crowned with many crowns, will call the faithful home. With the words of Dean Alford, well-fitted to be the prayer of a Christian mystic, we may say farewell :

Bring near Thy great salvation,
Thou Lamb for sinners slain ;
Fill up the roll of Thine elect,
Then take Thy power and reign ;
Appear, Desire of Nations,
Thine exiles long for Home ;
Show in the heavens Thy promised sign,
Thou Prince and Saviour, come !

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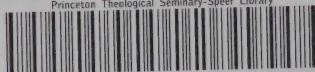
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